Gloria tells solons: Go ahead with Charter change

Story on PAGE A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

No mask? 'Bra' will do

ITO ANG TUNAY NA WONDER BRA!
AKIN NA YAN!

By Lullie A.Micabalo
PDI Mindanao Bureau
and Philip Tubeza

WITH Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II himself admitting that drugstores have run out of N95-masks, Filipino ingenuity has come to the rescue.

In Piñan, Zamboanga

NO MASK/ A7

Panic in Beijing; jubilation in Toronto

BEIJING/TORONTO—Beijing, acknowledging mass panic had hit China's SARS-infected capital, quarantined more residents on Wednesday, even as jubilation swept Toronto after the World Health Organization lifted its warning against travel to Canada's financial capital.

Beijing's new mayor denied speculation that the capital was about to be sealed off

PANIC/ A5

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Thursday, May 1, 2003 ★★ 72 pages / 7 sections / vol. 18 / no. 142 P15 website: www.inq7.net

SC ends Meralco's bid to avoid refund

High court throws out 2nd final pleading

By Michael Lim Ubac, Delmar Cariño and Abigail L. Ho

A DOUBLE whammy yesterday hit Manila Electric Co.—an order from the Supreme Court for it to immediately refund the excess charges that it imposed on customers and a report that it incurred heavy losses last year.

The high court's third division threw out a second plea filed by Meralco on April 16, effectively ending the company's legal attempts to block a huge refund to its customers.

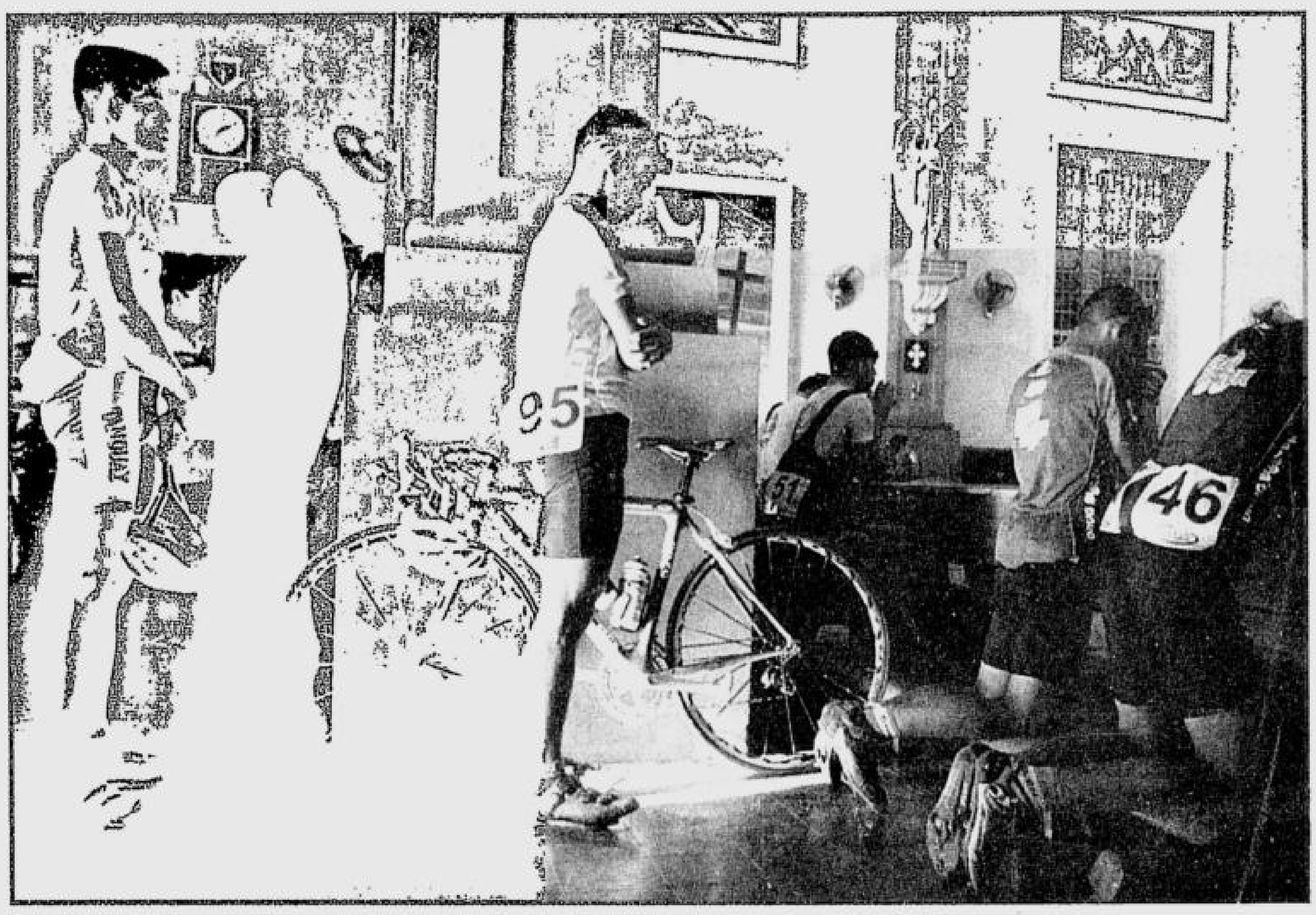
Before it could even begin to think of ways to refund the overcharges, estimated at more than P28 billion, Meralco confirmed it suffered a net loss of P2.01 billion last year, compared with a net profit of P1.49 billion in 2001.

Meralco president Jesus Francisco said the net loss was largely due to the failure of the company to collect deferred purchased power adjustment charges from customers.

Francisco said the company would likely return to a net profit in the three months to March due partly to higher electricity sales.

He assured customers that Meralco would comply with the court order. "There's no question

SC/ A21



THE PAUSE THAT REFRESHES VAL HANDUMON

Cyclists of the Tour Pilipinas 2003 bikathon make time on Wednesday for prayers and reflections at the St. Ferdinand Cathedral before they start the 5th lap in Lucena City. Arnel Quirimit topped the 5th lap but Merculio Ramos maintains the overall lead. (*Story in Sports, Page A26.*)

Nationwide network of SARS centers to be set up

By Armand Nocum

THE GOVERNMENT plans to build a nationwide network of SARS response centers with the capability of the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine, so far the only medical facility designated to handle cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in the country.

RITM director Remigio Olveda yesterday told the INQUIRER that regional SARS response centers would be set up in the cities of Baguio, Cebu and Davao to help the health care system in the countryside cope with any SARS outbreak.

Olveda said SARS response centers at the provincial and district levels would form the frontline in the country's battle against the flu-like virus, which has killed two people in the Philippines.

He said the nationwide network would be completed this month after the RITM finishes the training of medical personnel who would man the SARS centers.

The Department of Health has set aside P100 million for the project that will equip the three regional centers with at least one or two negative pressure rooms.

"We are upgrading the SARS centers to the level close to RITM," he told the INQUIRER.

Citing the case of Vietnam, however, Olveda said high-tech gadgetry was not that important

NATIONWIDE/ A5

GMA: S'pore, China laud Filipino health workers

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—There was a most touching moment for President Macapagal-Arroyo during the formal, crisis-charged SARS summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and China.

Singapore and China acknowledged the role of overseas Filipino workers in their fight against SARS. And the President was beside herself with pride.

She said Singapore Prime Minister Go Chok Tong told her that he was very impressed with the Filipino nurses because even if they were on vacation leave, they decided to report for work when they learned about the SARS outbreak.

Arriving early yesterday morning from Bangkok, the site of the summit, Ms Macapagal yesterday lauded the Filipino health workers for their "act of heroism" in the fight against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

In a speech during the 6th national convention of the Liga ng Mga Barangay, Ms Mapacagal said that the OFWs working in hospitals abroad had put their lives at risk by putting themselves in the forefront in the battle to lick SARS.

"The Filipinos have placed

GMA/ A7

Labor, pro-Erap groups to hold Mendiola rallies

By Volt Contreras, Carlito Pablo and Gerald G. Lacuarta

DEPOSED President Joseph Estrada yesterday assailed law enforcement officials for continually dragging his name in raising the security alert over possible Labor Day violence.

"There are many issues justifying street rallies today—PPA, double standard of justice, government anomalies—and I have nothing to do with these," he said in reaction to reports that authorities are bracing for "pro-Estrada" demonstrators, among others, who are expected today to mark the second anniversary of their bloody siege of Malacañang.

"Pro-Erap sila nang pro-Erap," he said, referring to the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police. "They should stop using my name. It's overused."

LABOR/ A19

A BLAZING SUMMER VIC ICASAS/CONTRIBUTOR

A fire at dawn Wednesday burns to the ground the homes of 150 families in Barangay Cembo, F. Macday corner JP Rizal Streets in Guadalupe, Makati City. No one was hurt in the blaze which is believed to have been started by an unattended candle.

2 villages tell medical heroes to keep out

By Christian V. Esguerra

IT'S tough working at the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) in Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

RITM medical staff members are now being discriminated against by a paranoid, and largely misinformed, public ever since they started handling the country's SARS cases.

According to RITM administrative officer Rodolfo Villarico, residents of Camella Subdivision and Pleasant Village, which are located near the government hospital, are asking its healthcare workers not to enter their areas.

Villarico said the request was coursed through a letter sent to the RITM last Monday.

The subdivisions' streets are sometimes used as a shortcut by RITM staff.

"We're basically ostracized in these villages," he told the INQUIRER. "Our workers who live there are trying to educate (the residents) on SARS, but neighbors are avoiding them."

Villarico said he himself had experienced discrimination.

"Those who know I work in RITM refuse to sit beside me during Sunday Mass. So I'm alone on the pew on some occasions," he said.

Residents of the posh Ayala-Alabang Village similarly are concerned that they might be infected by SARS, said Rep. Ruffy Biazon. They are set to meet with

2 VILLAGES/ A7

COA clears PEA: No overprice in road project

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE COMMISSION on Audit has cleared the former management of the Public Estates Authority (PEA) in the alleged P600-million overprice of the President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard, a 5.1-km road in the Manila Bay reclamation area which its principal critic dubs the "most expensive asphalt road in the country."

The total cost, including price adjustments, in the construction of the asphalt road was "reasonable and, therefore, not overpriced," according to the findings of a special audit team.

Banking on the COA report, ex-PEA deputy chief Manuel Beriña yesterday asked the Office of the Ombudsman to junk the plunder case filed against him and other officials by whistle-blower Sulficio Tagud Jr., a former board member.

In a nine-page motion to dismiss, Beriña, former Assistant General Manager Jaime Millan, former Deputy Manager Bernardo Viray, and former project management officer Pocholo Zorilla said COA's findings "not only exonerate the respondents from the present charge of plunder (but) it also affirms that they had performed their functions as officers of the PEA with integrity, ability and honesty."

The respondents, along with seven higher ranking PEA officials, were the

COA/ A21

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/05/01/03

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FrontPage

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Gloria on Cha-cha: Go ahead

By Dona Pazzibugan and Juliet L. Javellana

IN THE CLEAREST sign yet on where she stood on the issue of Charter change, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday gave the go-ahead to legislators to proceed with moves to amend the Constitution.

In a statement issued by Malacañang yesterday, the President said she did not pose any objections to Charter change.

"I leave Congress to pursue its own strategic horizons as it deems fit in the national interest," Ms Macapagal said.

"The presidency must be undistracted in its focus upon the most pressing concerns of our people," she said.

The President was earlier seen to be resisting the aggressive campaign by some congressional leaders to amend the Constitution, saying Congress had other priorities to take care of.

While she did not categorically oppose Charter change, she said this was not among her priorities.

The President's overt signal of non-opposition could be pivotal in the Charter change campaign led by Speaker Jose de Venecia which is said to be gaining ground in both chambers of Congress.

House legislators are proposing a shift in the system of government from the presidential to a unicameral parliament.

Ms Macapagal has declared that she will not stand in next year's elections.

In the event, House legislators say it is just fine with them if the President wanted to stay neutral on the issue.

"We want her to be neutral," said De Venecia.

Tarlac Rep. Gilbert Teodoro, the leader of the 63-member Nationalist People's Coalition said the President was not really expected to push for Charter change because she has a job to do.

Manager of the nation

"She is the manager of the nation, her term is ending and she has to manage the situation. There are the problems of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), the fighting in Mindanao and the economy. She has her hands full," said Teodoro who has been all-out in his support of Charter change.

Besides, he said, amending the Charter was the job of Congress and not the President.

Teodoro said he hoped the senators would see the light and agree to constitutional changes now.

"It's a golden opportunity to really do something good for the country," Teodoro said.

Meanwhile, a House statement said that more than 42,000 barangays have voted overwhelmingly for Charter change this year through the mode approved by the House—a constituent assembly.

The statement said that 2,500 barangay leaders who attended the 6th National Convention of the League of Barangays in Cebu City last Tuesday voted in an exit poll on the issue.

The exit poll showed that 94 percent of the convention delegates favored Charter reform with only 6 percent against. Of those in favor, 80 percent preferred amendments through a constituent assembly while 20 percent wanted a constitutional convention.

'Historic chance'

De Venecia had addressed the assembly, urging the barangay leaders to support Charter change and exhorting everyone not to "squander the historic chance to change the political structure and economic provisions of the 1987 Charter."

With the endorsement of the League of Barangays, all four major national leagues representing the country's provinces, cities and municipalities now support Charter change through an assembly, the House statement said.

It said the League of Provinces led by Gov. Rodolfo del Rosario, the League of Cities headed by Mayor Francis Tolentino and the League of Municipalities chaired by Mayor Ramon Guico earlier threw their support for the Charter change campaign.

De Venecia, who met with the senators the other day, said there was a "developing consensus" for a change to a parliamentary system.

Ping off the hook for 'candidacy'

By Blanche S. Rivera

LACSON: No candidate yet

OPPOSITION Sen. Panfilo Lacson, the most visible presidential aspirant of the so-called united opposition, is off the hook as far as the Commission on Elections is concerned.

Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said that neither Lacson nor the parties that endorsed his "candidacy" at the Club Filipino on Tuesday had violated the Omnibus Election Code.

Abalos said that the gathering of some 200 political allies of jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada's Partido ng Masang Pilipino and the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino was only a "pre-convention" and did not constitute an official launching of a candidacy.

The Comelec has set the date for the filing of candidacy for the 2004 national polls in November, two months ahead of the Jan. 14 schedule it had declared earlier.

Abalos said the Club Filipino gathering was "merely an aggrupation (sic) of political parties" which decided to endorse Lacson.

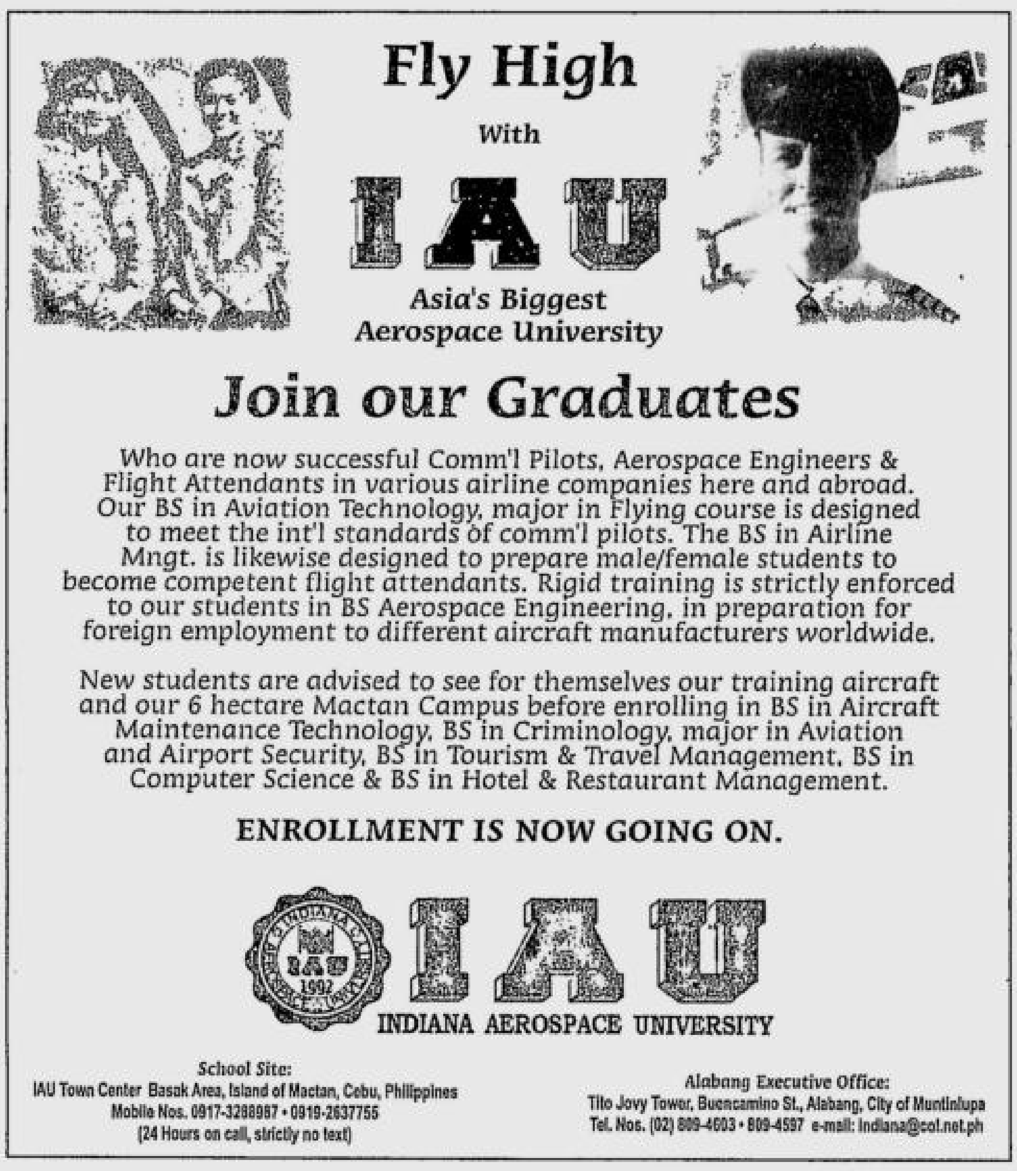
"It would be a violation if it is a convention with an agenda and purpose of formally selecting a candidate," Abalos said in a phone interview.

"If it's just a meeting of some parties deciding to pick a candidate that would carry their group, it is okay," he added.

Sen. Edgardo Angara, the LDP president who is said to prefer for business tycoon Eduardo Cojuangco to be the opposition standard-bearer, said the endorsement of Lacson this early may have violated election rules.

The Comelec also earlier cleared Lacson and administration Sen. Juan Flavier of the charge of premature campaigning for their television advertisements.

Lacson is the "image model" of Fundador while Flavier, the former health secretary, endorses the Clusivol multivitamin.



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Take care of Metro, BF asks successor

By Blanche S. Rivera

TRUE to his loyalty, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chair Bayani Fernando has asked his successor at the Department of Public Works and Highways to do one thing—take care of Metro Manila.

Fernando, who handed over the reins of the DPWH to newly appointed Secretary Florante Soriquez yesterday, said that the metropolis would be an important showcase of the DPWH.

"Where Metro Manila goes, the whole country goes," Fernando said during the turnover ceremony yesterday.

"No matter how beautiful the rest of the country is, if Metro Manila is a mess, then it would not look good for us," he added.

Fernando said that he expected Soriquez to continue to support the MMDA.

Soriquez, in his short speech, reiterated that he would "follow many of (Fernando's) policies.

"Changes will be made only when absolutely necessary," he said.

Fernando served only 105 days as DPWH Secretary, during which time Soriquez rose from being Assistant Secretary to Undersecretary and now to Acting Secretary.

Fernando said his only regret was that his term was too short for him to give local contractors a boost.

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JBIC sponsors Donor's Meeting for Forestry Sector Project

The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) sponsored a Donor's Meeting at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Makati City last April 23, 2003. The main objective of the meeting was to present the experiences and lessons learned from 10 years of implementation of the Forestry Sector Project (FSP I) funded by JBIC and the proposed Phase II of the Forestry Sector Project which aims to rehabilitate major watershed areas in the Philippines and provide additional income for the local communities.

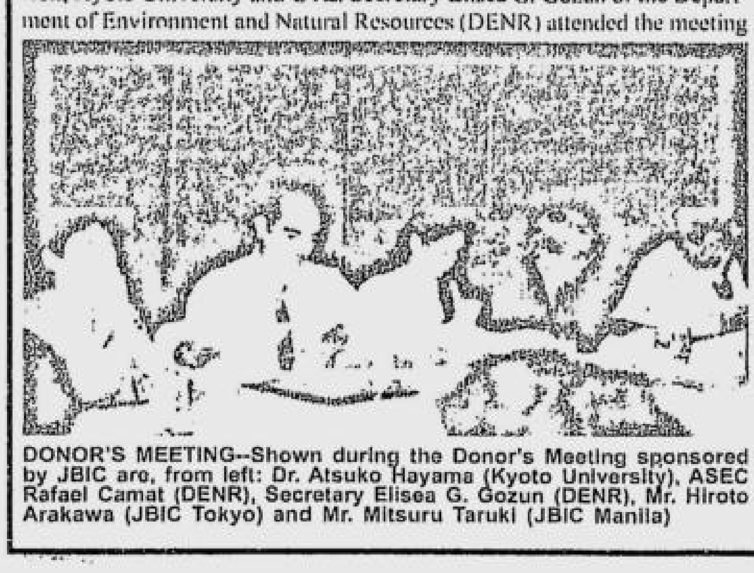
The proposed project is patterned with some modifications from the Forestry Sector Project (FSP I) currently implemented by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources financed through the loan grant from JBIC. The proposed project will be implemented in three (3) major watershed areas - the Magat and Cagayan River Basin in Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) and Region 2, Pampanga River Basin in Region 3 and Jalaur River Basin in Region 6. The project will cover a total of 71,300 hectares (potential area for rehabilitation) of watershed area. JBIC was encouraged to package this new project from the accomplishments and lessons learned of the FSP I which developed a total of 68,000 hectares of watershed and mangrove areas, nationwide and benefiting an estimate of 26,585 households. According to JBIC, they consider FSP I a model project in the implementation of Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) - a participatory approach in the implementation of reforestation projects and programs of the government.

The meeting was attended by representatives from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), OISCA (Japanese NGO), Conservation International (International NGO), Embassy of Japan, JICA, European Commission, Kyoto University and GTZ. Secretary Elisea G. Gozun of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) attended the meeting with DENR ASEC Rafael Camat. FSP I Project Director Gualberto T. Tortoza and other officials of the department. The National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) was represented by Deputy Director General Rolando Tungpalan.

Mr. Hiroto Arakawa, Director General JBIC Headquarters, Tokyo, led the JBIC group. With him were Mitzuru Taruki – Chief Representative JBIC, Manila; Mariko Yoshimatsu – Country Officer, JBIC Headquarters; Yukiko Kitasawa – Country Officer, JBIC Headquarters; and Leah Peñarroyo and Flery Chan – both Country Officers, JBIC, Manila.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the speech of the DENR Secretary where she expressed her appreciation for the interest of JBIC and other donor agencies in helping the government in its mission to protect and conserve the natural resources of the country – particularly the forestry sector. She stressed that there is really a need to continue the different reforestation activities throughout the country, but the lessons learned from other projects implemented by JBIC and other funding institutions should be taken into serious consideration.

FSP Phase II, if approved, will benefit more than 29,000 households from the three different river basins, both in environmental and economic aspects. The positive impact of this kind of project was proven not only through the lessons learned from FSP I but more on the lessons learned from the projects implemented by other agencies like ADB and OISCA. The two agencies were given an opportunity to present some of their projects on forestry during the meeting. One of the important outputs from the meeting was the suggestions and recommendations from the participants on how to improve the proposal of JBIC on FSP II:



DONOR'S MEETING--Shown during the Donor's Meeting sponsored by JBIC are, from left: Dr. Atsuko Hayama (Kyoto University), ASEC Rafael Camat (DENR), Secretary Elisea G. Gozun (DENR), Mr. Hiroto Arakawa (JBIC Tokyo) and Mr. Mitsuru Taruki (JBIC Manila)

Back row, from left: Mitzuru Arakawa, Philip Obieta, Jonas Leones, Akihiko Sasaki, Motohiro Hasegawa, Robert Jara and Percival Ramos. Front row: Yukiko Kitazawa, Katsuyoshi Ishii, Hiroto Arakawa, ASEC Rafael Camat, Gualberto Tortoza, Mariko Yoshimatsu, Malia Vasquez, Atsuko Hayama and Leah Penarroyo

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P5-B TAX CREDIT SCAM

Textile firm faces estafa raps

A SPECIAL interagency group tasked with investigating the P5.3-billion tax credit scam yesterday filed estafa charges against the Texasia textile firm for allegedly fraudulently securing and transferring 35 tax credit certificates amounting to P83.323 million.

Task Force 156 said Texasia had spuriously claimed tax credits at the finance department's One Stop Shop Tax Credit and Duty Drawback Center by submitting fake documents to support its claim.

Texasia was described by the task force as operating only as a "company in paper."

The tax credits were allegedly illegally transferred to Cathay Pacific Steel Corp., International Chemical Industries, Proton Pilipinas Corp. and Steel Asia Manufacturing Corp.

Texasia also allegedly utilized eight certificates worth P15.291 million to pay for its importations with the Bureau of Customs.

Named respondents in the case filed before the Ombudsman were 46 people, including a former finance undersecretary, two former senior officials of the One Stop Shop, 10 employees and 33 private individuals.

The One Stop Shop, an interagency group composed of the Department of Finance, the Board of Investments and the customs and internal revenue bureaus, was authorized to issue tax credit certificates to exporters as a form of incentives.

Exporters could use the tax credits to offset payments for taxes on imported raw materials and supplies, and to pay corporate income taxes. Exporters were also allowed to transfer these tax credits to other BOI-registered companies in exchange for goods or services.

Chingkoe family

Companies that have been identified as part of the scam were found to have ceased operations but somehow still managed to sell their tax certificates to businesses that were not really suppliers.

These companies allegedly conspired with the finance officials to defraud the government of P5.3 billion that should have been paid as taxes by the businesses that benefited from the fraudulent tax credits.

Of the total, P2.5 billion in tax credit certificates were cornered by 12 companies of the Chingkoe group that have already been charged.

The task force said it would file at least two more criminal complaints next month.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said the investigation into the fraudulent tax credits was part of the campaign against graft and corruption.

"These cases deprived the public coffers of much-needed revenues, demoralized the government work force and undermined public confidence in the government," he said.

The task force, which was revived and reorganized by Executive Order 30 issued on Oct. 6, 2001, has been tasked not only to investigate the scam but also to recover and collect the unpaid revenues.

The task force said most of the tax credit certificates secured by the Chingkoe group were sold to Petron Corp. and to Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., two of the country's largest oil refiners.

Of the P2.5 billion credits obtained by the Chingkoes, P1.2 billion were reportedly transferred to Petron and Shell.

The government now believes it was defrauded of more than P5.3 billion. A legislator earlier said it could go up to as much as P20 billion. *Clarissa S. Batino*

RP mission not invited to Iraq

By Christine Avendaño

THE Senate foreign relations committee yesterday questioned the decision to send a Filipino humanitarian mission to Iraq after it was told that the Philippines had not received any invitation to do so from the United States or Iraq.

Officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs disclosed at a hearing by the committee that the country would send the mission in response to United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1472 issued on March 28 that called on the international community to provide immediate assistance to the Iraqi people.

Acting Foreign Secretary Delia Albert said the mission would be composed of medical personnel, social workers and a police and military contingent.

The disclosure prompted panel members Senators Joker Arroyo and Rodolfo Biazon to say the government had no legal basis to send the mission.

They urged Malacañang to abort the plan.

Sen. Manuel Villar, who chairs the committee, told DFA and military officials in the hearing that it would be "dangerous" for the executive branch to pursue its plan to send the mission to Iraq given the lack of a legal justification.

Villar told reporters that he found the UN resolution "vague" and called attention to its having been issued a long time ago.

"I think we invited ourselves (to go to Iraq)," he said.

He pointed out that the Philippines was just one of the few countries belonging to the so-called "coalition of the willing" to make such a gesture.

"I think the DFA doesn't want to admit that we are just following what the US is telling us to do. That's why it had a hard time explaining why we're sending the mission."

Arroyo said that the executive branch should abort its plan as "nobody asked us to go there."

He added the mission could face risks in Iraq.

Also yesterday some of the 500 soldiers, policemen and medical personnel who had volunteered to be part of the mission were becoming uneasy over reports that the US-led coalition forces are encountering pockets of resistance in some areas in Iraq and requested that they be posted at "relatively peaceful" areas. *With a report from TJ Burgonio*

Comelec execs off to Korea to check on bidding winner

By Blanche Rivera

TWO officials of the Commission on Elections will fly to South Korea today to check the background of the winner of the bidding for the P1.7 billion automation program.

Comelec Commissioner Resurreccion Borra and Director Jose Tolentino will conduct an ocular inspection of the plants and facilities of the Mega-Pacific Consortium in Seoul, according to Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr.

Borra chairs the automation phase of the election modernization program while Tolentino heads the Comelec technical working group.

The poll body sought to dispel speculations that the Comelec favored Mega-Pacific Consortium despite the failures of its machinery to meet the Comelec requirements during the testing.

Abalos said in a statement that there was no basis for media columns expressing fear that they would bungle the automation of polls.

He said that the Bids and Awards Committee had given a failing mark to the other bidder, Total Information Management Systems, Inc., because its machines failed to detect previously counted ballots.

The TIMS also submitted a higher bid price of P1.297 billion for the 2,500 counting machines that the government would purchase for next year's election.

"The members of the BAC and Commissioner Borra . . . stand by their decision to award the contract to Mega-Pacific Consortium," Abalos said.

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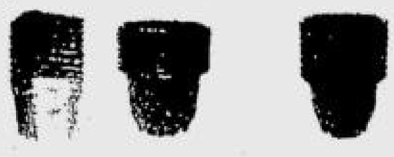

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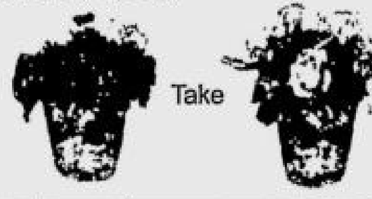

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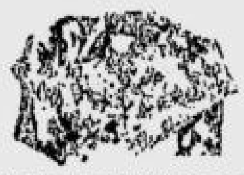

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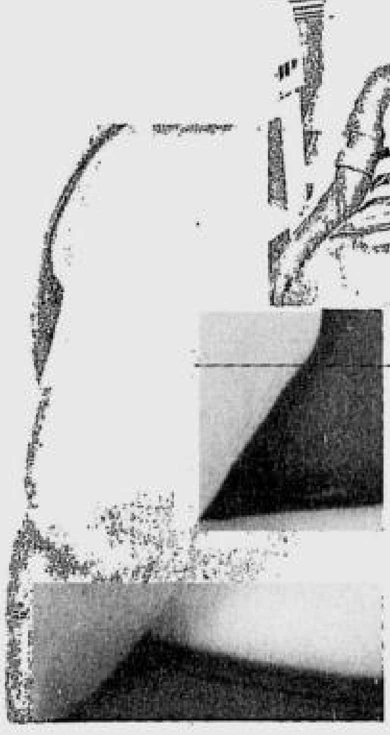

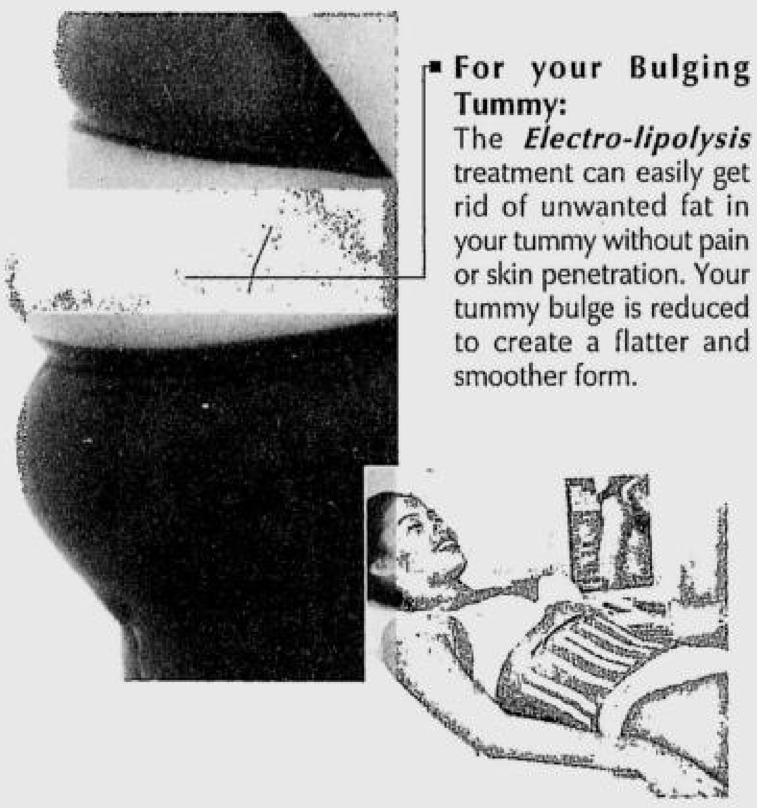

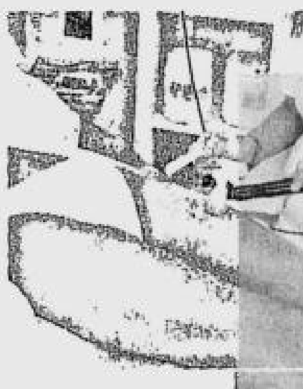

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Obet's DAR report card: Not zero at all

By Gerald G. Lacuarta

AGRARIAN Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan yesterday listed the department's accomplishments in his first 100 days in office after critics blasted him for his allegedly *bokya* (zero) performance at the department.

"The very spirit of agrarian reform does not simply rely on the distribution of land to farmer-beneficiaries," Pagdanganan told a workshop of people's and non-government organizations at the Sulô Hotel.

Agrarian reform groups the other day thrashed Pagdanganan for his alleged failure to install farmer beneficiaries in contentious landholdings despite the absence of legal impediments.

Pagdanganan said his critics should justify and substantiate their claim as he explained the system of awarding land to agrarian reform beneficiaries.

"I'm working to be one of the best secretaries of the DAR. We are listening and we are working," he said.

Pagdanganan explained that while the old practice was to award land to farmers and stop there, now this has to be accompanied by support services which consist in the creation of agrarian reform communities (ARCs), rural infrastructures, foreign-funded projects, credit facilities, market extension, organizational strengthening, capacity building and technology transfer.

Pagdanganan invited his critics to join him in threshing out "where agrarian reform is now, where it is going, and how best to get there."

'TRUE MARTYR OF THE PEOPLE'

Slain rights activist buried

GENERAL LUNA, Quezon—Human rights activist Eden Marcellana was buried Tuesday in a secluded corner of the municipal cemetery here after a one-and-half-hour funeral march joined by some 2,500 mourners, mainly relatives, friends and fellow activists.

The marchers, many of them punching the air with clenched fists, carried colored balloons proclaiming "Justice for Eden, justice for all," and "Katarungan kay Ka Eddie and Ka Eden."

People lined both sides of the road and raised clenched fists as the funeral cortege made its way to the cemetery.

The final burial rites were capped by progressive songs fit for martyrs and heroes, including Marcellana's favorite song "Awit ng Bayani," interspersed with agitated calls for the blood of the perpetrators of the brutal double murders.

The bodies of Marcellana, the 31-year-old secretary general of the Karapatan human rights group in Southern Tagalog, and Eddie Gumanoy, chair of the farmers' group Katipunan ng mga Samahang Magbubukid sa Timog Katagalugan, were found in Bansud town, Oriental Mindoro province last week.

Initial findings by a justice department fact-finding team indicated the two may have been tortured and killed by the military as their colleagues have alleged.

Rafael Mariano, national chair of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, called on mass activists "to turn the feeling of sorrow into a productive and potent force that will turn all her (Marcellana's) dreams and aspirations into a reality."

Orly Marcellana, the widower, and his two daughters, stared blankly at the open coffin.

"You should all be proud that you have a town mate here who offered her life for the sake of the oppressed sectors of the society, unlike most of the corrupt town officials here. Eden is a true martyr and heroine of the Filipino people," Pedro Gonzales, Bayan's Quezon chair, said before the closed gates of the town hall.

In Calapan City, at least six youth activists pasting posters that condemned the murders of Marcellana and Gumanoy were arrested by police at dawn yesterday, according to a Bayan-Southern Tagalog Muna official.

Edwin Alog, Bayan-ST deputy secretary general, identified the arrested activists as Malou Marasigan of the Student Christian Movement, Jose Marie Baquiran, Jason Gargullo, Jeffrey de los Reyes and Richard Avila of Anakbayan- Oriental Mindoro and a certain Jhun.

But the six were released yesterday after Vice Mayor Juvy Magsino of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, interceded.

Calapan provincial officials and congressional representatives said they would conduct their own investigation into the double murder. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Marlon Ramos and Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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SUAL, Pangasinan—For his patronage of the 1.2 megawatt power plant in his home province, former President Fidel V. Ramos was honored yesterday by Mirant Philippines, the country's biggest power supplier.

In simple rites, capped by the unveiling of the zone marker, Mirant president Ed Bautista cited Ramos for his strong leadership, firm vision and strong support in making Sual Power Station a reality, thereby ensuring a steady power supply in the country.

Ramos was accompanied by members of his Cabinet headed by former Energy Secretary Francisco Viray, and former Napocor president Guido Delgado, former Pangasinan Gov. Oscar Orbos, Undersecretary Ben de Leon, Energy Undersecretary Mariano Salazar, Northern Luzon Presidential Assistant Rene Diaz, SITRA and Metro Skyway president Cesar Quiambao and Mirant vice president Rosendo Ferrer.

The Sual Coal Thermal Plant project started in 1995 during the incumbency of Ramos. It started commercial operation in 1999.

During the last two years, Mirant Philippines has emerged as the top corporation in the country with the lowest cost in the electricity, and the most reliable.

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SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) has been threatening the world especially the Asian Region. Little is known about the disease entity, and unfortunately no effective vaccine has been developed yet. What is alarming to people however, is its highly contagious nature.

A person with a weak immune system or lowered body resistance is more likely to be burdened with chronic health problems. It also makes them more susceptible to SARS infection. Along with other precautions, we therefore need to strengthen our immune system to enable our body to resist being infected.

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Nationwide network of SARS centers to be set up

From page A1

in containing the spread of SARS.

"It's not a matter of having the most sophisticated facilities, what is important is that the control measures are strictly followed," he said.

Olveda said it was also important that the entire health sector be prepared to handle any SARS outbreak. "Once it hits town, it is likely to spread fast," he said.

P50M for villages

Upon her return yesterday from the Asean summit on SARS in Bangkok, President Macapagal-Arroyo immediately met with leaders of the Liga ng Barangay to mobilize them for anti-SARS campaign.

The President told the country's 1,600 village leaders that P50 million of the P1-billion SARS fund had been set aside to finance their anti-SARS measures.

For his part, PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane said he had ordered police commanders to organize teams that would help health authorities track the movement of suspected SARS cases.

Ebdane also directed regional, provincial and city police officials to encourage citizens to report any outbreak of the disease in their localities.

As part of her sweeping anti-SARS measures, the President has empowered the health secretary to call in the police and military to enforce quarantines.

Amid all these efforts, the Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday briefed the foreign diplomatic corps on the SARS situation in the country to preempt any issuance of travel warnings to the Philippines.

DANTE PERALTA

MASKED maids in Hong Kong get together after Sunday Mass.

"The few SARS cases in country do not put the Philippines on the same category as China and Canada. We will protest any travel advisory or travel restriction on account of SARS," Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople said before leaving for a conference on human trafficking in Bali, Indonesia.

Airport authorities

In Cebu City, Ms Macapagal said Southeast Asian airport officials would meet in the Philippines next month in an effort to coordinate their fight against SARS.

She said leaders of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations had approved her proposed Asean airport officials' meeting "to work out relevant procedures for departure and arrival screening."

The meeting will be held either at Clark or Subic airport.

"On May 15, we will have a follow-up meeting to the SARS summit. The airport authorities will discuss common procedures so we can prevent the spread of SARS through travel," Ms Macapagal said.

She said the leaders adopted the principle of having common quarantine procedures, and stressed the need for proper information and prevention.

As part of their contribution to the anti-SARS campaign, authorities at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport said the aircondition system at two terminals would be adjusted to a temperature of 28 degrees Celsius from 22 degrees Celsius to kill any SARS virus spread by infected international travelers. *Reports from Jolene R. Bulambot and Kathy I. Navarro, PDI Visayas Bureau; and Norman Bordadora and TJ Burgonio in Manila*

Panic . . .

From page A1

but admitted that its hospitals were overloaded with cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Nearly 10,000 residents were under quarantine after the city confined residents of one building in the heart of the capital and another building in a northern suburb.

Nine of the 11 new SARS deaths and 101 of the 166 new cases reported by China on Wednesday were in Beijing, pushing the city's death toll to 75 and number of infections to 1,440. The latest figures brought the death toll nationwide to 159 and the cumulative number of cases to 3,460.

On China's southern tip, Hong Kong said the SARS had killed seven more people and infected another 17, raising its death toll to 157 and total number of cases to 1,589. The flu-like virus has now killed 373 worldwide and infected more than 5,400 in more than 30 countries.

As Beijing and Hong Kong continued to grapple with the SARS crisis, Toronto celebrated as the WHO lifted a controversial travel advisory to the major Canadian city. The advisory aroused a storm of protest from Canada, which saw the warning hitting its national economy. *(Story on Page A1)*

Even so, the only country outside Asia where people have died of the flu-like virus that has no cure promised tougher steps, including screening of its airports.

"We are delighted with the WHO's latest decision," Ontario Health Minister Tony Clement said. "And we certainly know that our vigilance must not stop."

System overwhelmed

Acting Mayor Wang Qishan said there had been panic in Beijing, which has seen frenzied buying of medicines and staple foods, and that the virus was threatening to overwhelm the health care system.

"As the panic of the public has not yet been alleviated, a great deal of work is needed to ensure social stability," Wang said in his first meeting with foreign journalists since taking office."

Wang, who was appointed last week following the resignation of his predecessor for mishandling the health crisis, denied that the city of 13 million people would soon be closed off from the rest of the world or dusted with anti-SARS medications by aircraft at night.

"We haven't made any such decisions," he told reporters, many of whom wore gauze masks to the news conference.

Fears that Beijing might be isolated and martial law declared spread last week after police set up roadblocks to check people in vehicles for SARS symptoms. Worries about the disease prompted thousands of people to flee Beijing last week.

Wang said the outbreak had overwhelmed 21 Beijing hospitals designated for SARS treatment. "Due to a shortage of berths at designated hospitals, not all suspected SARS patients can be hospitalized there in a timely manner," he said in a written statement distributed at the news conference.

A special 1,000-bed SARS isolation unit is under construction north of the city, and Wang said the first 195 patients were to be moved in on Wednesday.

Wang said the SARS outbreak remained "severe" and the number of cases in the city was still high. He described the coming week as "of critical importance."

Wang promised to redouble anti-SARS efforts, adding more hospital beds and bring in doctors and nurses from outside Beijing. He said he would set aside an office near his own for experts from the World Health Organization.

The mayor said no cases had been reported in rural villages surrounding the capital. He said every household had been issued a thermometer and told to check family members daily for fever—a key SARS symptom.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on Tuesday told reporters in Bangkok, where Asian leaders met to plot their fight against the virus, that he was confident SARS could be controlled eventually.

"There is a need for us to recognize the fact that the SARS epidemic is going to be a long-term, complex and relapsing epidemic," said Wen.

China, harshly criticized for covering up the disease initially, had learned its lesson, Wen said, adding that reporting of cases had improved and the WHO was welcome to send teams to any hospital in China.

US officials expect travellers to continue spreading the scourge in an increasingly interconnected world and say the disease—and others like it—is likely to become endemic. *Reports from AP and Reuters*

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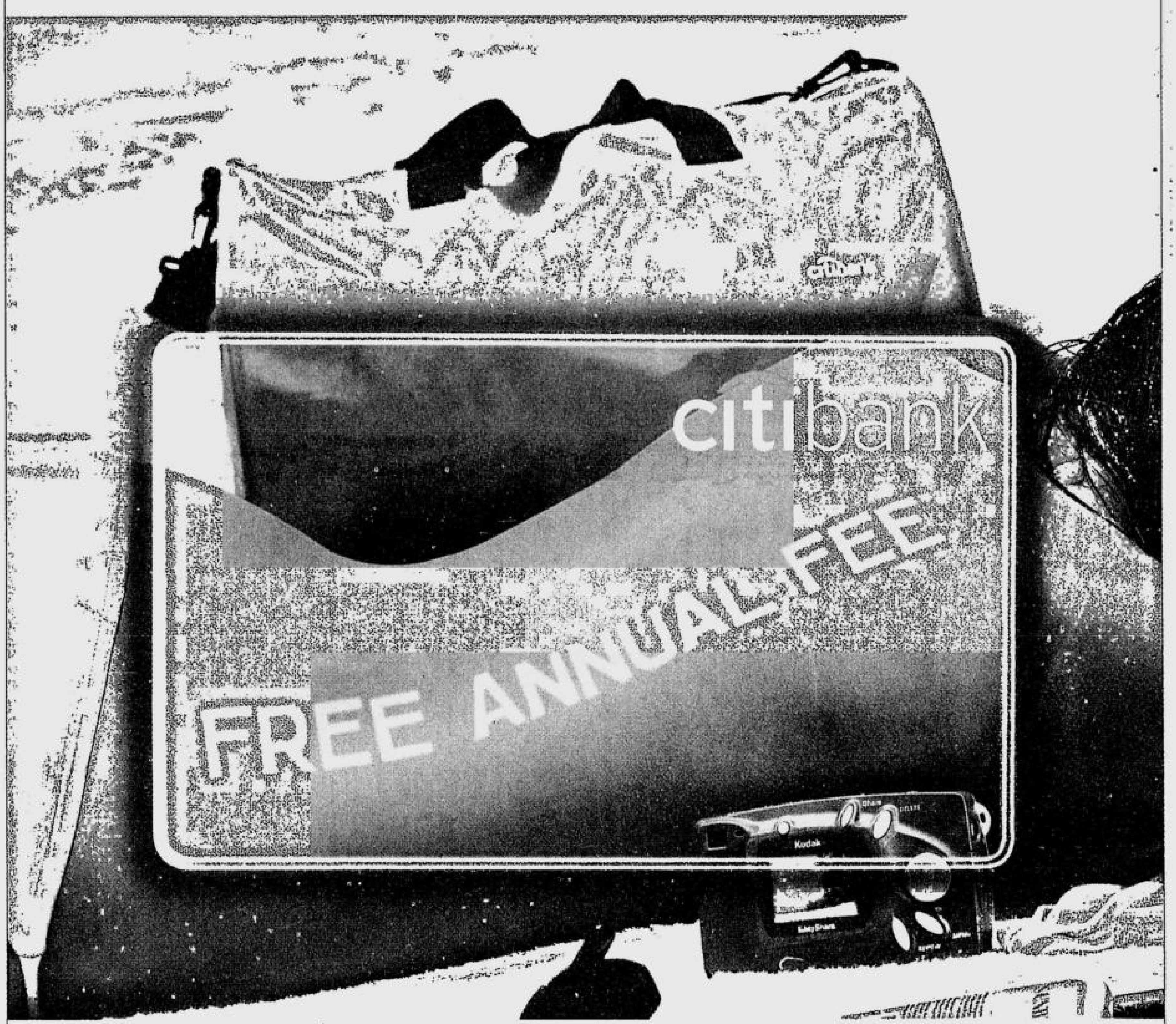

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2003 YES CAMP STARTS

Message from the DENR SECRETARY

The **Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)** through the **Youth Desk, Special Concerns Office,** joins the **Department of Education** and **Kabataang Sama-Samang Maglilingkod, Inc.** in convening the *Youth for Environment Summer Camp 2003* and strongly encourages all sector to support this endeavor.

Through the conduct of the **YES! Camp 2003,** we strengthen youth empowerment all over the country as we harness their creativity, ideals and concerns into an active campaign for the protection and preservation of our environment.

This camp, which gathers youth leaders nationwide, envisions to provide knowledge on the environment through Course Sessions on the Philippine Ecosystem and inter-active environmental games and contests.

I would like to congratulate the participants,, guests and organizers of the Youth for Environment Summer Camp 2003, as you make use of your precious vacation to have a worthwhile fun and learning experience for *our* environment.

By joining the efforts of other stakeholders, the youth, as the hope of our motherland, can be a formidable force in the continuing challenge to make our Mother Earth a better place to live in.

(SGD) ELISEA G. GOZUN
Secretary

Message from the DepEd SECRETARY

I would like to greet the participants to the Youth for Environment Summer Camp (YES) 2003. The activity is yet another laudable initiative of the youth in the face of challenges brought about by globalization and environmental degradation.

It is heart-warming and assuring to know the efforts of the organizers, sponsors, and participants, that individuals remain hopeful about the future of this country.

The 2003 YES Camp is an affirmation of our responsibility to look after our environment. Our schoolchildren should appreciate this great task and responsibility; they are the ones who will benefit from the efforts they are making today.

This activity from April 30 – May 4, 2003, will hopefully be the start of a continuous and conscious effort from all of us to preserve what is left of the goodness and bounty of Mother Nature.

We hope this 2003 YES Camp will be an experience to remember and will leave memories of a fruitful summer spent on the effort to protect the environment and maintain ecological balance.

Best wishes for a meaningful camp!

(SGD) EDILBERTO C. DE JESUS
Secretary

Officers of the Student Government, Sangguanlang Kabataan, Science and Environmental Clubs, STEP and YECS, including Boy And Girl Scouts, Teacher-Advisers and Education Supervisors converge today until May 4, 2003 at the Teachers' Camp, Baguio City for the **2003 YOUTH FOR ENVIRONMENT SUMMER (YES) CAMP.** The YES Camp is being organized by the Department of Education, through the Center for Students and Co-Curricular Affairs (DepEd-CSCA), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), through the Youth Desk-Special Concerns Office, and the Kabataang Sama-Samang Maglilingkod (KASAMA), Inc., in cooperation with the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI).

THEME: Ugnayang Kabataan, Ugnayan sa Kalikasan at Kapaligiran

The YES Camp aims to:

- Generate awareness on the state of the Philippine ecology;
- Know the causes and effects of environmental degradation and further develop the youth's appreciation and participation in school and community-based environmental programs;
- Enhance environmental leadership and values development among the students;
- Encourage to organize school-based environmental clubs and organizations that will support environmental initiatives in the grassroots; and
- Formulate an action plan and a pledge of commitment to be implemented in their own school and community to strengthen students' commitment on environmental protection and action through the implementation of relevant programs and projects in their respective clubs and organizations.

The YES Camp also serves as a significant venue to showcase the students' talents and skills through participation in environmental essay-writing contests, poster-making contests, environmental quiz, *Sayawit sa Kalikasan,* Palaro sa Kalikasan and other competitions and activities as training for participatory school-based environmental campaigns.

The YES Camp Organizing Committee is chaired by **Mr. Joey G. Pelaez** of the Department of Education and with vice-chairpersons **Mr. Gerald A. Ortiz** of KASAMA and **Ms. Maggie Danganan** of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

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Relapses worry HK officials

SOME SARS patients in Hong Kong have suffered relapses after being listed as recovered and discharged from hospitals. A Hospital Authority spokesperson said less than 10 patients have relapsed. Officials were "very concerned" about the cases and were studying them. Health Department spokesperson Jimmy Lee earlier confirmed news reports that one patient had fallen ill again and was readmitted to a hospital last Thursday after being discharged three days earlier. *AP*

* * *

US GOVERNMENT scientists have launched an all-out effort to develop a vaccine against SARS. Experience with related diseases in domestic animals, scientists said, suggests a vaccine against SARS may be attainable within as little as one year, although two to three years is more likely. *AFP*

* * *

ALONG with pencils and books, children in Singapore must now pack thermometers in their school bags so they can check their temperatures twice a day to detect SARS. Teachers began distributing $2.8 million worth of government-subsidized digital thermometers to primary school students. *AP*

* * *

NINE employees of a hospital in the western Indian state of Maharashtra have tested positive for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), bringing the total number of confirmed cases in the country to 19, the state's health minister said Wednesday.

The employees of Siddharth Hospital in the city of Pune had been quarantined for the past week as they had been treating SARS-infected patients in the hospital, minister Digvijay Khanvilkar said.

"Nine ... have tested positive," he told AFP.

* * *

THE number of SARS deaths in Taiwan has risen from one to three, health officials said Wednesday evening.

The two people added to the list had been staying at Taipei's Hoping Hospital, which was sealed off last week to contain the spread of SARS.

The total number of SARS cases in Taiwan still stands at 78, "because the two new casualties were already counted as SARS cases," Health Department spokeswoman Chi Hsueh-yun told The Associated Press.

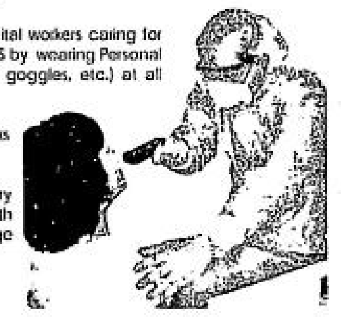
* * *

CHINA'S largest export fair ended Wednesday as one of the country's biggest economic casualties of the SARS crisis, with significantly reduced turnout and depressed trade volumes. *AFP*

SARS DOH OFFICIAL ADVISORY

Thursday LABOR DAY ISSUE 1 May 2003

Health Workers, Protect Yourselves!



The DOH is advising all health workers, specially hospital workers caring for SARS suspect patients, to protect themselves from SARS by wearing Personal Protective Equipment (such as mask, gloves, caps, goggles, etc.) at all times in dealing with suspect cases.

However, there is no need for the public to wear masks at this point.

Meanwhile, as SARS crisis manager, Health Secretary Manuel M. Dayrit has instructed the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation to develop a special package for health workers caring for SARS patients.

Q. WHAT IS SARS?

A. SARS means Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. It is caused by a new strain of coronavirus associated with the common cold virus.

It is:

SEVERE - because it may lead to severe pneumonia as its main outcome;
ACUTE - because of the quick onset of symptoms of the disease which can be anywhere between two days and one week;
RESPIRATORY - because it affects mainly the respiratory system; and
SYNDROME - because of the clustering of different signs and symptoms, usually high fever, dry cough and difficulty of breathing or respiratory distress.

To diagnose SARS, a history of travel to, or residence in, a SARS-affected area, or contact with a known SARS case should be established.

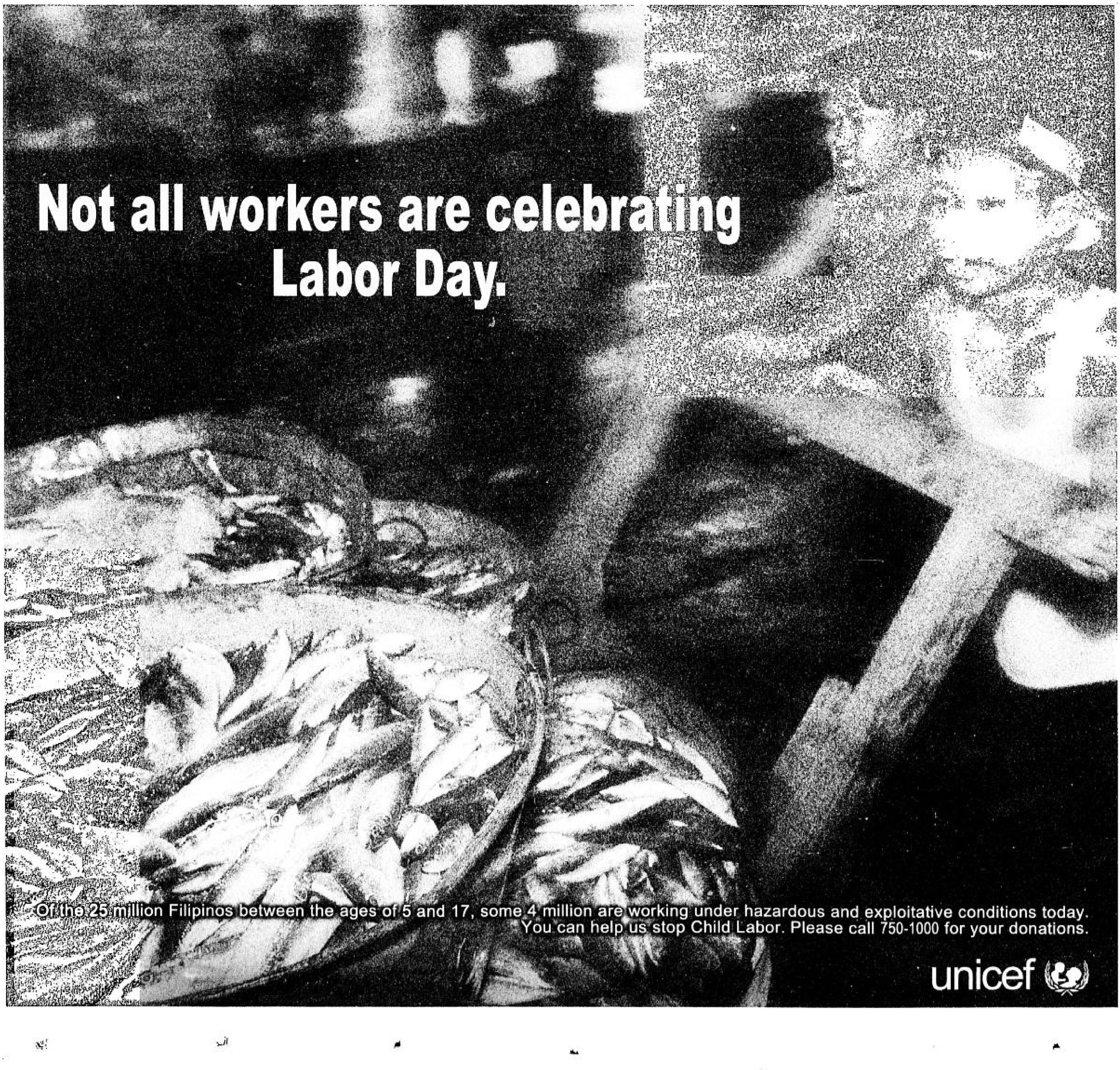
In order for your body to fight off infections, boost your immune system by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Eat a well-balanced diet, avoid stress, exercise regularly, and don't smoke.

Reported SARS cases in the Country
(March 17 - April 30, 2003)

SARS suspects, total admitted	64
total discharged	52
still confined	12*
SARS cases	3
SARS deaths	2

*San Lazaro Hospital & Research Institute for Tropical Medicine

SARS HOTLINES: 741-7048 / 743-1937 or Type MED<SPACE>SARS then send to 2333 for Globe subscribers or 257 for Smart users or text HOTLINE SARS <space> (Message) then send to 2960 or EMAIL: sars@doh.gov.ph


Not all workers are celebrating Labor Day.

Of the 25 million Filipinos between the ages of 5 and 17, some 4 million are working under hazardous and exploitative conditions today.
You can help us stop Child Labor. Please call 750-1000 for your donations.

unicef

Filipino health workers lauded

From page A1

themselves at grave risks in other lands for the sake of humanity and in the name of professionalism," she said.

"*Hangang-hanga sila sa mga nurses. Kahit on vacation leave sila, bumalik at nagtrabaho ulit para mag-alaga sa mga SARS victims at nagsabi 'kailangan ninyo kami sa trabahong ito'* (They so admire our nurses. Even if some of them were on vacation leave, they returned to work to take care of SARS victims saying that there was a need for them to work)," Ms Macapagal said.

Appeal to protect OFWS

With these acts of heroism, the President appealed to leaders of Southeast Asian countries to protect the Filipino workers who may be suspected or afflicted with SARS.

President Macapagal said that during the summit, she asked her fellow Southeast Asian leaders to protect not only the health of the Filipino workers but also their jobs.

"I ask them to extend the best treatment possible to our nationals suspected to be or actually afflicted with SARS and all possible accommodations be granted to guarantee the security and safety of their jobs on the face of the regional economic slowdown," she said.

Ms Macapagal also recognized the "sacrifices" of the Filipino workers here and abroad as the country celebrates Labor Day today.

"Day after day, there are acts of Filipino heroism that do not necessarily run to the limelight that is why I made a special appeal in the Asean summit in behalf of our hundreds and thousands of Filipino workers spread across the region," she said.

"As the Labor Day approaches, let us reminisce the profound sacrifices being made by the Filipino workers. *Kailangan nating proteksyonan ang kapakanan ng ating mga kababayan pati trabaho at kanilang kalagayan* (We need to protect the welfare and the work of our countrymen abroad)," she said.

Three proposals

President Macapagal said the other Asian countries accepted three proposals from the Philippine government during the summit.

One was to extend equal treatment to foreign nationals who may be suspected to have SARS under the principle of "no blame and dignity for all concerns."

She assured that the Filipino workers would be given similar benefits with the nationals of those countries.

Another proposal was to convene a meeting among Asean's airport authorities on May.16 to work out relevant procedures such as entry and exit policies and measures to prevent the spread of SARS. *(See story on Page A1.)*

It was also agreed by Asean members to tap experts in drawing up a health emergency plan within the Asean framework.

2 villages . . .

From page A1

barangay officials and Department of Health representatives next week to seek assurance against the possible spread of the disease.

Dr. Beatriz Quiambao, head of RITM's SARS committee, allayed fears the disease might spread to nearby communities by air.

"In the first place, SARS is not airborne," she said. "It won't travel by air from Luzon to the Visayas. It doesn't work that way."

Limited contact

Quiambao said only about 70 of RITM's 570-man staff were in direct contact with people possibly infected with SARS. While attending to patients they are required to wear imported and expensive protective suits, including gloves and N95 mask respirators supplied by the World Health Organization. Used medical gear are incinerated inside the RITM compound.

Even staff members who don't have direct contact with SARS patients follow a strict protocol that requires them to leave their work clothes at RITM and take a shower before leaving its premises, according to Quiambao.

She admitted that some employees had complained of a sore throat following an encounter with patients but none of them showed symptoms of SARS.

Quiambao said RITM was still awaiting the release of the P15-million fund earmarked by Malacañang for the construction of negative pressure isolation rooms and the renovation of its laboratory.

Since March, RITM has admitted at least 20 people who could be infected with SARS. Eleven are still confined at RITM's 35-bed ward.

First SARS test

Meanwhile, specimen taken from a niece of Adela Catalon, the country's first SARS case who died last month, will be the first to be subjected to a SARS laboratory test at the RITM.

RITM director Dr. Remigio Olveda said the hospital was ready to release Catalon's 27-year-old niece as soon as they get the results of a "polymerase chain reaction" (PCR) test on her.

The PCR test is done on blood specimen of SARS patients to determine whether it carries the SARS coronavirus.

Catalon's niece is under quarantine at the RITM after she came down with fever following exposure to Mauricio, who was under her care.

The blood specimen of three previous SARS cases—a German national, Catalon and her father, Mauricio—were sent for SARS testing to Japan. But due to the large number of countries that send their samples there, the tests are taking some time to complete.

Olveda said RITM might do tests on the three people's remaining specimens next week. *With a report from Armand Nocum*

No mask? Bra padding will do

From page A1

del Norte, the personnel at a district hospital use the foam padding of bras as surgical masks. It's comfortable very affordable at only P10 and it really fits, they said.

In Manila, sidewalk vendors are making do-it-yourself masks and cashing in on the latest "craze." And they are reporting brisk sales although some of them know their wares do no offer protection against SARS.

"It's my belief that if it's your time, then you have to go, " said Norma Lao, 39, of San Sebastian St., Quiapo, Manila, who sells surgical and gas masks along Carriedo Street in Quiapo.

Lao who got the masks from a factory somewhere in Manila, sells them for P10 each. She herself was not wearing a mask—the better to call out to pedestrians to buy her masks.

At the back of the Sta. Cruz Church, Jimmy Palma, 48, of Hermosa, Tondo, Manila; sells "homemade" surgical masks at P20 each. He said he got the masks from a supplier who told him to sell them because it's the latest "craze." He used to sell nail cutters.

"For me, this is protection from the dust and the smoke from vehicles. I don't think they're effective against SARS. They're thin," Palma said when asked about the effectiveness of his masks.

Although he tries his best to convince passersby to buy the masks, he and his family do not use the masks.

"It would be a waste as they just stay in the house," Palma said. "Of course I'm afraid for my family but we can't do anything because we don't have money."

There were a few takers for his masks.

"Maybe because of widespread poverty, people do not have the money to buy these things," Palma said.

But Marissa Omega, 42, of Plaza Lacson, Sta. Cruz, Manila, said she had many buyers, some of whom buy masks for their entire family.

"I wear the mask so that they will be enticed to buy from me. And of course, for protection," Omega said. "I sell 100 cloth masks a day. Sometimes, somebody buys for his entire family."

Omega said her entire family also wears cloth masks anywhere they go "for their own protection."

Omega said vendors started wearing the masks after hearing that there was a SARS victim somewhere in Ongpin Street, Binondo, Manila.

But the vendors of Quiapo and Sta. Cruz have to deal with a more pressing danger other than SARS—the police.

Omega was arrested Monday because she was vending illegally. .

Dr. Filipinas Nielo, chief of the Pinan District Hospital, said there is plenty of supply to make "bra-padding" masks.

Nielo required hospital personnel, especially those who are assigned in the emergency room, information and receiving rooms, to wear facial masks everyday.

She also required her staff to ask incoming patients if they are balikbayan. Children are also prohibited from entering the hospital.

Dr. Carmencita Icao, Zamboanga del Norte's health officer, said her staff was closely monitoring the Nabilid wharf in Roxas town, the only port of entry in the province.

It is in this wharf that foreign cargo vessels loaded with cement, sugar and copra dock every week.

A quarantine officer was assigned to the wharf by the health department, while a ship's crew were not allowed to disembark without undergoing quarantine for two weeks.

Prostitutes or the so-called "akyat barko" girls are not allowed to board the vessels while the crewmembers are under quarantine, Icao said.

Icao added that municipal health officers of the 25 towns and two cities in the province have been required to monitor the entry of overseas Filipino workers in their respective municipalities. *With a report from Lourdes Valerie Handumon*

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OPINION

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Little to cheer about

EDITORIAL

THE CELEBRATION of Labor Day today is cast against the background of more threatening concerns generated by the SARS epidemic, its economic fall-out as well as that of the war in Iraq that is just winding down.

Labor has not done well since the economic slowdown that followed the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and this year's celebration only serves to throw the spotlight on the working class' disadvantages rather than its gains. There is little therefore for organized labor to cheer as its members march in the streets to mark, especially in the Philippines, the 100th anniversary of the first march by Filipino workers of the Union Obrera Democratica Filipina to Malacañang Palace to demand the right to unionize from the American governor general.

After a hundred years of unionism, fewer than 10 percent of the workforce of 37 million are unionized, and of the three million union members, only 500,000 are covered by collective bargaining agreements. These figures illustrate the inherent weakness of unions. Reflecting this weakness are the facts that the moderate unions are not demanding higher wage packages and are content merely with non-wage concessions, and that the left-wing unions are spreading out their grievances from union benefits toward political issues such as political freedom and human rights or the impact of trade liberalization on labor.

Compounding these is the fact that disgruntled political groups have jumped into the populist carriage of May Day, with the threat of staging demonstrations that would revive the inflammatory atmosphere of the May Day attack on Malacañang two years ago by cohorts of the toppled Estrada administration. From evidence, staging Edsa 4 is a fantasy. Conditions that fanned May 1, 2001, do not exist, and the police can very well handle disturbances from these groups.

But trade unions have more serious problems other than being disadvantaged by trade liberalization, globalization and the fall-out from the recent economic shocks. The most blatant attack on unionism came recently from the proposal emanating from the Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce to ban strikes for 10 years in exchange for a promise to generate three million jobs in the next three years. How these jobs can be created in a depressed economy is a mystery, but there's the catch. Employers will pay workers sweat-shop wages, meaning "apprentice wages" equivalent to 75 percent of the minimum wage.

This proposal, if accepted, will set back unionism by robbing it of its right to strike as a weapon for collective bargaining. At the same time, it is an effective pay cut based on the false argument that sweat-shop wages reduce production costs and make industry more competitive.

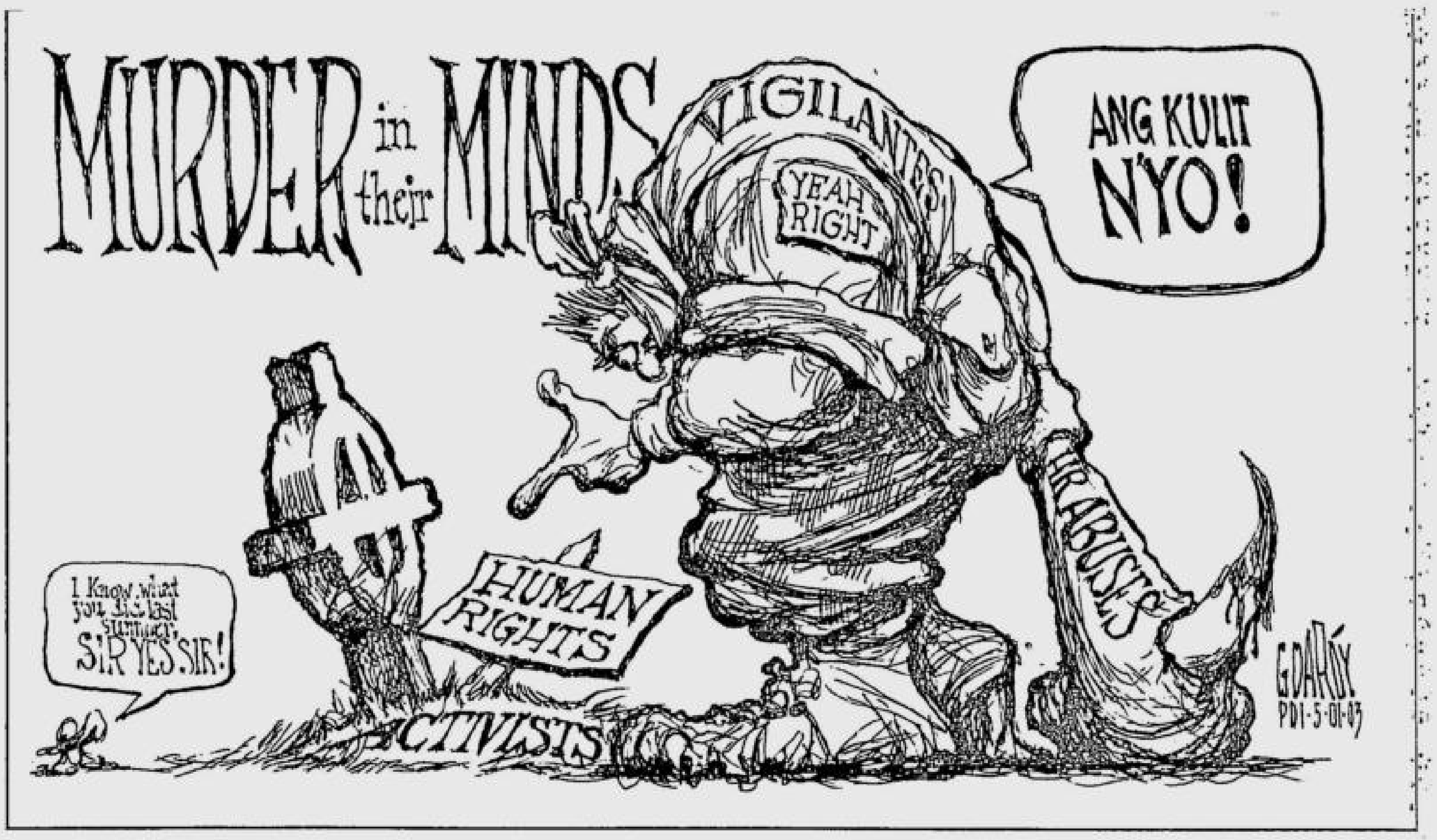
That the proposal comes from the FCCC is not a surprise. Historically Chinese-Filipino firms are not the most generous employers.

In the culture of labor-capital relations in the Philippines, when it comes to cost-cutting to make companies competitive, labor has always been the first target of cutbacks. The last to get the axe are the perks and relatively high wages of managers.

The argument that low labor-cost economies have grown faster because of low wages—like China, for example—is a false argument. Organized labor is only a fraction of the employed labor and non-unionized labor, the majority is not protected by unions and CBAs and paid wages below minimum wage. In effect, most workers are already laboring under sweat-shop wages.

Statistics show that the number of strikes has dropped from 136 in 1992 to 31 in 2002. These indicate two things: first, they reflect the weakness of the unions which are pragmatic enough to realize not to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs during hard times; and, secondly, they are reasonable enough to settle for non-wage concessions. The claim therefore that strikes are the cause of high production costs has no basis in fact.

Given the reluctance of management to shed fat by first scrapping management perks and eliminating inefficiencies, a 10-year strike ban not only throws back the trade union movement to where it was a hundred years ago. It will also perpetuate the subsidization of the inefficiencies and disproportionate wage structure in many Filipino companies.



Workers denied justice through delay

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

IT'S another Labor Day during which workers will again march in the streets and innumerable speakers will extol the virtues of labor with empty platitudes. Militant labor organizations usually ask for pay increases at this time but everybody forgets what is more important than token pay increases: justice for workers.

We have laws to protect workers but there might as well be none because of the delay of the courts in enforcing them. The National Labor Relations Commission was created precisely to resolve labor-management conflicts speedily. But its decisions are appealable to the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court and, ironically, that is where the cases are usually delayed.

The standard tactic of management in any labor case is to delay it to starve out the worker so that he would either give up the fight in exasperation or agree to a compromise. That is why arbiters were assigned to the NLRC, to hear the cases summarily and speedily without being hampered by the technicalities attending formal court hearings. But because of excessive workload and management's dilatory tactics the case still takes as long as those being tried in a regular trial court.

The arbiter's decision, if favorable to the workers, is appealed by management to the NLRC divisions, and from the division to the en banc. From there, management can take the case to the Court of Appeals and still further to the Supreme Court. And here the case can remain frozen for years as the magistrates concentrate on more important cases and the small workers are forgotten, exactly as management intended. Isn't it ironic that justice is denied to workers through delay in our highest courts?

Perhaps realizing this, the Supreme Court has limited appeals in labor cases to the Court of Appeals, but some cases are still appealable to it on a question of law. And while theoretically the tribunal sets a deadline for lower courts to decide cases (which are often violated on technicalities) it does not do the same for itself. It can take its own sweet time and even ignore pleas by workers for the speedy resolution of their cases.

During all this time, the workers and their families are suffering, usually jobless, sometimes starving, always harassed by their employers, denied jobs by their employers' friends. This makes them more susceptible to pressure to compromise with their employers, drop the cases and forget their rights, agree to lower amounts for their back wages and damages or, worse, lose hope entirely and just abandon the case.

Each time this happens, employers are encouraged to repeat the same sins against other workers. They got away with it the first time, they can always get away with it again.

If finally the case becomes final and executory, is that the end of the worker's Calvary? Not by a long shot. His employer will refuse to obey the order of the NLRC to pay back wages and damages. To remedy this, the NLRC requires employers to deposit bonds equivalent to the claim of the worker before the hearings begin so that when the case is finally terminated in favor of the worker, the NLRC merely uses the bond to pay the worker.

But some bonding companies, conniving with the employer, refuse to honor the amount guaranteed by the bond, claiming that the employer did not pay the annual premiums. In such a case, the NLRC can order the sheriff to seize assets of the employer and sell them to pay the amounts due to the worker.

But sheriffs are only human, susceptible to the frailties and temptations that humans are heir to. He can take his own sweet time or find so many excuses not to do his duty. So the worker is left holding an empty bag, and the sinful employer laughs all the way to the bank, encouraged to exploit and abuse and violate the rights of his other employees.

This is a common occurrence and is widely known in the labor sector and the courts. The wonder is why our magistrates and commissioners don't do something to prevent this abuse. And why militant labor organizations don't march, demonstrate and demand faster justice for their members.

How can we make the wheels of justice move faster for the employees? Obviously, one way is to increase the number of arbiters and commissioners in the NLRC to cope with the workload. Obviously, too, the dilatory tactics of employers should be curtailed. Aside from stricter rules to achieve this, it means limiting appeals to higher courts where cases sleep the sleep of the dead. The NLRC commissioners are the experts on labor laws; they should have the final say on labor cases. Justices of the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court have many other things to think about. They should leave labor laws to the experts.

Labor groups complain of suspected corruption in the labor courts. With so much money at stake for employers, it is not far-fetched that some of them would rather spend some of it to pay off crooked arbiters and commissioners than give them to their employees. It is a matter of *amor propio*. Employers would rather pay corrupt officials than be put on record as having lost a labor case against an employee. This is an area that the Ombudsman, Sandiganbayan and the Supreme Court should address.

And what about bonding companies which refuse to honor their bonds? And employers who refuse to pay the penalties against them? Obviously the majesty of the law should be upheld at all costs and our rules on contempt should be strict to discourage them from making a mockery of justice.

I think we should all think about these today, Labor Day.

The war in our midst

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

(This is a much abbreviated version of the talk I gave at the graduation rites of UP Visayas in Iloilo City last Monday. The full text appears on Inq7.net on Saturday.)

THE PHILIPPINES is in the midst of a war today.

I do not mean by this the "war against terror," though that is cause for grave anxiety itself. We have been fighting the Abu Sayyaf for some time now, and for some reason, despite the deployment of the awesome resources of government, we can't seem to get rid of them. I do not mean by this the war in Iraq, though that is cause for even graver anxiety. The physical war is over but its consequences have yet to unfold. I do not mean by it our war against crime, though that is still an even graver cause for anxiety. You know crime rages when people you know get to be victims of it.

I mean by it that this country is in the midst of a war with itself. That is cause for the gravest anxiety of all.

The clearest proof of it is the finding by a local survey group last year that 19 percent of the population wants to leave the country. That is a startling figure. Of course, we can always be optimistic, or facetious, and look at the bright side of it. We can always say: At least 81 percent of the population still wants to remain in this country.

But that is cold comfort. I do not know that we will find another country in Asia that shares this lot. Other Asian countries have their share of nationals leaving, but never from a feeling of oppression and hopelessness, those who leave saying not goodbye but good riddance.

This is a war, as fierce as the Japanese Occupation that befell this country more than half a century ago. This is a war, as virulent as the threats posed by terrorists today. But it is a war that is all the harder to win because the enemy is more faceless than the terrorists who hide behind the mask of anonymity. It is a war that is all the harder to win because origins are more unknown and its unfolding more unpredictable.

The basic axiom of war is: Know your enemy. It is commonsensical. You do not know your enemy, you will not be able to fight him. Certainly, you will not be able to defeat him. We have not heeded that axiom. If the enemy has found a way to waylay us again and again, it is simply because we do not know who he is. We do not know what he is.

Who is our enemy?

For some, it is the past: specifically, a colonial past, a history of oppression, the building of a culture of corruption and sloth which pins us down like a ton of rubble. For others, the enemy is the world outside of us: specifically, the uncontrollable events that happen on a global scale and that defeat our honest efforts to get out of the rut we're in. For still others, the enemy is fate itself, or the improvident hand of heaven or hell: specifically, the natural disasters that have come our way.

Of course, these things weigh heavily on us. True enough, we cannot discount the effects of 400 years of colonial rule, the longest period of subjugation of any Asian country. True enough as well, we cannot discount the ravages brought on by a kind of globalization that is skewed in favor of the developed world. True enough, we cannot discount even the hand of improvidence. That a volcano should explode after half a millennium of sleep and drown a once lush region in ash and rock must qualify as gratuitous mayhem.

But other countries have experienced roughly the same things too and prevailed. Why have we not done so?

I go back to classical antiquity to answer that. Specifically, to the Greeks, who bequeathed to us the seeds of civilization as we know it. Those people were big on one thing, and that was character. They did not just speak about character, they lived it. Not least when they were conquered by Alexander, Aristotle returning the favor by conquering Alexander's heart and mind as his mentor. Show me a man's character and I will show you his destiny, the Greeks used to say. What is true of individuals is true of nations as well.

Character, if we are to go by Homer, is nothing more than our exercise of wit and will. Odysseus was the craftiest of men, inventor of the wooden horse that harbored a troop of Greeks inside its belly. He was never at a loss to find a way to get out of a bind. When cursed by fate to wander the earth for years before returning to his home, he used his wits to survive, amid a dazzling array of tormentors, from the deadly Cyclops to the deadlier sirens.

But when his efforts ran against the hand of improvidence, he never wrung his hands or tore his hair and despaired. He willed himself to accept his condition, not in resignation or surrender but with patience and vigilance, biding his time, waiting for the opportunity to escape. Always, he believed in himself, with a little help from friends, human and divine.

That is wit and will. That is character.

The Filipino does not lack for wit. His creativity is everywhere in evidence, not least in the arts. The fact that he was able to survive 400 years of colonial rule, the most part of it characterized by brutality and oppression, must testify to his ingenuity.

That creativity is shown more clearly in the way the Filipino keeps excelling in other countries. I do not mean by this only Lea Salonga or Cecile Licad, who have stormed the musical world. I mean by this the many Filipinos doctors, businessmen and inventors who have made a name for themselves elsewhere. I mean by this the many overseas workers who have endeared themselves to their employers by their industry and talent.

The Filipino does not lack wit. What he lacks is will.

Jihad against poverty, ignorance—Razak

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE PRESIDENT'S appointments to the Sandiganbayan have been awaited since Easter Monday when the 90-day period for filling up vacancies to the graft court expired, but until now, nearly two weeks later, they haven't been announced. Court sources say this may be because tremendous pressure is being exerted on the President from various quarters.

One of those being considered is Judge Norberto Geraldez, who topped the list of recommendees of the Judicial and Bar Council. Sources say Geraldez is being considered on account of pressure being exerted by Sen. Edgardo Angara, but this prospect has met severe criticism from various quarters for the simple reason that there's a clear conflict of interest.

* * *

Judge Geraldez is the husband of lawyer Regina Padilla-Geraldez, a senior partner of Angara's Accra law office. The problem stems from the fact that Accra packaged all the coconut levy deals of Cojuangco and his cronies in the late 1970s and up to now it represents them in a number of civil and criminal cases before the Sandiganbayan. Now Accra lawyer Geraldez's husband is being considered for appointment to the Sandiganbayan, and talk is that it is a political accommodation to Angara who would naturally be interested in strengthening his law firm's hand in the coco levy cases. But this would put Judge Geraldez in the unethical position of ruling on cases packaged and defended by his wife's law firm.

In court practice, justices who may have a blood relationship with either an accused or his lawyer are called upon to inhibit themselves during deliberations on the case. In the case of Judge Geraldez, the conflict of interest is very clear and the President would be violating the tenets of good governance by appointing him to the Sandiganbayan.

* * *

The launching by an opposition group identified with former President Estrada of the presidential candidacy of Sen. Panfilo Lacson the other day may be an indication of the desperation of the senator's camp. Angara, whose faction of the LDP didn't join the proclamation of Lacson, quickly pointed out that this move might have violated election laws. But my reading is that the Lacson camp was ready to defy the law in order to preempt the Supreme Court decision on the motion for reconsideration of the Kuratong Baleleng case, which will be handed down any day now. Considering the overwhelming majority of justices that voted in the earlier SC ruling ordering the regional trial court to proceed with the reopening of the case, it is most unlikely that the SC would reverse itself. The Lacson camp must have been fully aware of this and this may be the reason it decided to jump the gun and declare him a candidate. Now it could say that the SC ruling on the KB case is political persecution and blame it on Malacañang.

* * *

It's one of those nightmares of journalists: Cecile Alvarez and I had interviewed DBP chair Vitaliano Nañagas for an hour on dzRH, and when I wrote up the story for this column, I still identified him as Land Bank chair! It must have been my excitement at the tremendous impact of the Roro system on the economy. My apologies to Lani Nañagas. But he wants it on record that also involved in the inter-governmental effort to set up the Strong Republic Nautical Highway (Roro system, to us) are Agriculture Secretary Cito Lorenzo and Presidential Adviser on Agricultural Modernization and NFA Administrator Lito Sarmiento, as well as Presidential Assistant on Official Development Assistance Marita Magpile-Jimenez, who, he said, was instrumental in the issuance of EO 170, revitalizing the Roro system.

* * *

Last Tuesday's conference sponsored by the Center for Strategic Studies headed by Fr. Romeo Intengan Jr., in cooperation with the office of Presidential Adviser for Special Concerns Norberto B. Gonzalez, dealt with "Rethinking Security in the Southeast Asian Region." The main speaker was Malaysian Defense Minister Najib Abdul Razak, who discussed current and emerging security threats confronting Southeast Asia and offered some proposals to address them. Razak, 52, is reportedly second in the line of succession to the post of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad (the immediate successor is said to be Abdullah Badawi, 62, former foreign minister and now acting prime minister). That Razak appears very embedded in the Malaysian leadership succession makes his recent pronouncements on the Mindanao problem doubly significant, for Malaysia has been at the forefront of mediation efforts between the Philippine government and the MILF and wields plenty of influence in the Organization of Islamic Conference. From Razak's remarks, it seems we can expect a comforting continuance of Malaysia's support in the future.

* * *

Razak offered sensible advice to both sides. He stressed the need for the government to work on confidence-building and give-and-take measures and look at the "big picture" of bringing peace and progress to the South and developing its full potential, instead of dwelling on "parochial and self-interests" and adopting a "winner-take all attitude."

On the other hand, Razak admonished the secessionist groups to work within the constitutional framework, reminding them that "challenging the legitimacy of this sacrosanct document is something we do not support nor condone." He also observed that the "calling of jihad is often misused by Muslims, instilling fear and creating terror to others," when what is needed is a "jihad against poverty, ignorance, underdevelopment and prejudice." He exhorted the MILF to combat "radicalism and militant elements" within the organization, stressing that if it indeed claims to represent Muslims, then it should begin to promote Islam "the right way" and not adopt extreme and militant tendencies.

More to worry about than SARS

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IF this paper were to run a banner headline tomorrow proclaiming that 75 Filipinos had died of TB in a single day, we would probably be laughed out of the industry. After all, tuberculosis is no longer the stuff of news—it's "old hat"—and the last prominent Filipino to have died of it was President Manuel L. Quezon.

And yet TB is still very much part of our national reality. To this day, 75 Filipinos die of TB every day. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) says the Philippines bears the "highest tuberculosis burden" of all countries in the Western Pacific region. With 30 million Filipinos infected with TB, that means about 32 percent of the population currently lives with the threat of TB. And since TB is an infectious disease, then family members of those 30 million are also considered at risk of acquiring the disease.

TB is so much a part of Filipino life that not even material wealth and comfort and the highest standards of health care can protect a Filipino family from it. Why else, for instance, are anti-TB vaccinations considered routine for all Filipino babies when in developed countries the disease is virtually unknown? Why is "primary complex," the early stage of lung weakness that signals the onset of TB, considered almost routine here?

The awful truth is that TB is so prevalent in this country that children can pick it up from almost anyone—their playmates, their nursemaids and other household help, and even from jeepney drivers and teachers, two groups where TB is especially prevalent. True, conscientious, health-conscious parents can ask all household members to get health clearances and present chest X-rays before they're employed, but can they ask everyone their children meet to present sputum samples as well?

To ensure our children and loved ones are completely safe from TB, we need to make sure that our communities are likewise completely TB-free.

* * *

BUT as I said earlier, who cares about TB, right? It's an old disease, so much a part of our health landscape it blends right in with the scenery. No matter that 75 Filipinos die of TB every day.

In contrast, how many Filipinos in the PHilippines have died of SARS? By last count, two, and only one, the father of Adela Catalon, the nursing aide who must have picked up the virus in Canada, was infected locally, and by his daughter at that.

Sen. Juan Flavier, a former health secretary, understands the implications to the country should SARS erupt into a full-blown epidemic as it seems to have in China and Hong Kong. He urges the Macapagal administration to act as if the entry of SARS into the country were a foregone conclusion, and to institute measures such as mandatory quarantine for arriving as well as departing overseas workers, to assure foreign employers that our workers are SARS-free.

President Macapagal, on her way to the Asean summit on SARS in Bangkok, sounded determined to eradicate the threat of SARS in the country. She spoke about strengthening the country's border controls, especially on arriving tourists, businessfolk and overseas workers. Earlier, she had also released P1 billion to the DOH for anti-SARS measures.

Of course, it makes sense to be alarmed about SARS, since it stands a great chance of killing a great number of Filipinos, given our overall health situation, especially the widespread and endemic nature of many infectious diseases already killing so many Filipinos.

My only worry about all this fuss being raised about SARS is that in the hysteria of containing this disease, we may end up taking money away from programs meant to address diseases like TB, which already constitute a great threat to the health and lives of Filipinos.

* * *

TB is not the only infectious disease that poses a challenge to our health professionals, policymakers and politicians.

According to USAID figures, 66 of the country's 79 provinces are considered endemic for malaria. Infections are widespread in rural areas, with some localities registering 40-60 percent malaria infection rates. A patient's chances of dying from dengue are much higher than from SARS, with dengue outbreaks and epidemics exploding on the scene every two or three years in urban areas.

And while the Philippines has so far succeeded in containing the spread of HIV/AIDS, with less than 3 percent infection rates among high-risk groups (considered the threshold beyond which HIV is said to have infected the "general population), we still cannot afford to be complacent against HIV/AIDS given our active sex industry and the sizeable number who use illegal drugs through injection.

Should SARS afflict the country on top of our already heavy burden of infectious diseases, it could very well break the back of our health system even as it raises the death toll considerably.

* * *

THE MEETING of Asean heads of state and health ministers to discuss concerted action against SARS is commendable. It's clear that in today's borderless world, no country can act on its own against a single disease, or even hope to keep it out completely.

But in 1998, Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO director general who is now leading the global fight against SARS, declared that Asia is the "epicenter of the world's TB emergency," urging governments to make TB their "top priority."

Six "high burden" countries, the Philippines included, account for over half of all eight million new cases of TB in the world. Compared to the toll that TB exacts on us, perhaps the SARS hysteria is a form of denial.

Deregulation is anti OFW

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

FIERY Labor Day greetings (as in *maapoy na pagbati*) to all workers, especially my fellow *unyonistas* at the INQUIRER. *Mabuhay tayong lahat!*

First, some heartwarming stuff: an e-mailed letter I received a few days ago from an overseas Filipino worker, a factory worker in Taiwan. I am not printing the letter sender's name because I have not asked permission. Who said OFWs are only looking after their own families? Read this.

"Dear Ma'am: Peace! I wonder if you would take time to reply to a lowly migrant worker. Nonetheless, I took courage to write to you because I desperately need help. I am a factory worker here in Taiwan and I am hoping to be used by God to establish an organization that will raise funds that we can use ***to help people who are poorer than us.*** *(Underscoring mine.) We want to start but we need someone to help us put into use whatever little we can come up with every month. Based on my reading of your articles, I came to the conclusion that you are the one that can help us.*

"I am inarticulate, so if you're interested, may I ask you to give me your contact numbers so we can talk? Or if you want, I will give you my cellular phone number next time I write. I do hope to hear from you soon. I intend to gather the members of the core group this weekend and I am hoping to report the outcome of this inquiry to them. God bless you. Respectfully yours..."

Now, the heavier stuff. OFWs and NGOs working for the OFWs' welfare are lobbying for the repeal of Sections 29 and 30 of RA 8042 (Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995). These two sections seek the deregulation of the labor export industry and the phaseout of the regulatory functions of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). In other words, OFWs should eventually be left on their own to fend for themselves, and their employment and welfare would be a matter between them and their employers. Ha? But why when we are trying to crawl out of the oppressed-OFW mind-set and asserting ourselves as world-class, top-of-the-heap global workers?

In March last year, Sen. Francis Pangilinan filed SB 2068 (An Act Repealing Sec. 29 and 30 of RA 8042) which is supported by the Alliance of Migrant Workers and Advocates to Amend 8042 (AMEND) and which many hope would be passed.

The deregulation of the labor export industry was included in RA 8042 on the premise that the Philippines would have become a newly industrialized country by 2000 (were they kidding?) and therefore there would be fewer Filipinos joining the outward labor exodus. The government could then lighten the burden it had placed on itself.

The prophecy turned out to be erroneous. The country still suffers from financial woes and continues to depend on the OFWs' annual remittances amounting to about $6 billion annually.

Supporters of Pangilinan's bill complain that despite the Philippines' non-NIC status and the Supreme Court ruling upholding the right of the state to regulate the labor export industry, deregulation is already being implemented by the Department of Labor and Employment through the POEA. Deregulation does not only mean streamlining of the bureaucracy, which is the more obvious fact. Deregulation is in fact an abdication of the state's obligations under the Constitution.

When you regulate something you put order to it. When you put order things could become so businesslike that everything has a tag price. When you deregulate, anything goes. But in the context of RA 8042, its critics cry that deregulation is, in fact, what "commodifies" human labor.

(If you ask me, the semantic load of both the words "deregulation" and "regulation"—of the flesh trade for example—imply that something is commodified. Regulation could also commodify. But I digress.)

Anyway, RA 8042 critics cite DOLE's agreement with Saudi Arabia that allowed wages to be determined by the "dynamics of the market." The only limit is that an unskilled worker cannot be paid less than the prescribed daily minimum wage (P280) of a non-agricultural worker in the National Capital Region.

New POEA rules on employment standards have reduced what were previously mandatory minimum employment standards to mere guidelines, subject to market forces or the employers' ability to pay. Parties involved have the "freedom to stipulate other terms and conditions provided these are not contrary to law, morals and public policy."

Deregulation could translate into the lessening of workers' benefits and entitlements in favor of so-called global competitiveness in the labor market. The anti-RA 8042 group called AMEND cites DOLE's Order No. 04 which took effect in June 2000. DOLE changed certain provisions of the Rules on the Standard Terms and Conditions Governing the Employment of Filipino Seafarers on Board Ocean-Goin Vessels adopted by the POEA. Section 20 states that "if a Filipino seafarer dies on board the vessel, his family could not claim any benefit, unless the cause of his death was established to be work-related." This is now part of the new standard employment contract for seafarers. In the past, seafarers and their families automatically received compensation for the disability or death of the workers while on board the vessel.

AMEND hopes the Senate will heed the pleas of OFWs. For while the government is exerting great efforts to upgrade and globalize Filipino labor, it seems to be downgrading its role in protecting the rights of millions of OFWs. Read my lips, government seems to be saying to OFWs, you're on your own.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Frequently lost, always found

YOUNG BLOOD

Monalinda B. Cadiz

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I HAD a pen that got lost. Three months ago, I accepted the fact that it was never meant for me.

"Manang Mona, is this the pen you've been looking for?"

Fully concentrated on the computer keyboards trying to finish an overdue report, I nevertheless turned around to face Fanny who asked the seemingly incomprehensible question. She was waving a familiar fat writing instrument with black ends. I froze despite the heat.

"Does it have a green label inside with the name 'Mon' scribbled on it?"

"Yes!" came Fanny's excited reply.

Oh, my Lord! It was my Pilot G-2 05 pen!

"Found it in Manang Vangie's drawer," Fanny explained.

To think that Manang Vangie had been retrenched five months earlier! There was no soul in the office who had not heard about the lost pen. My special pen.

Why special? Well, it had gotten lost for...errr...I can't remember now how many times. I stopped counting after the third time it landed on someone else's hands or drawer for days—even months! It found its way under a bed once and under tables many times, until someone who knew it was mine recovered it for me, usually after I had given up hope of ever finding it again. Today someone was handing it to me again, after it's longest sojourn to the unknown.

My G-2 is not as hi-tech as it sounds. It is your usual gel sign-pen, which is quite affordable even to high school students. It cost me P54 at the campus bookstore in the University of the Philippines Los Baños when I made my last trip there to get my transcript of records over two years ago. But even if it had gotten lost several times, only a fourth of the ink gel had become transparent, meaning it still contained a lot of ink.

But that hardly makes it very important. What really amazes me to this date is the nearly two-year, lost-and-found charade. Besides, almost always someone else would spot my G-2 somewhere and promptly return it to me. It was never me who found it.

It would have been easy to remove the green strip of my ID wrapped around the ink case. My nickname is written on a green cartolina plastered with double-sided tape. It would have been a piece of cake to remove it and tell the world it was one of the G-2 pens issued by the office. No explanations would have been necessary. But even mere participants in the programs of the training center I am connected with have brought me back my G-2.

So while still in a jubilant mood after it was returned to me for the nth time, I was inspired in the middle of the Friday afternoon rush to write about my G-2's saga.

Of course, I instantly wove metaphors the moment Fanny handed it to me. (I felt so deeply indebted to her that I vowed to mention her name as often in this article as possible.) I suddenly lost consciousness of rattling computer keyboards, of office chatter or the screech of my boss' car as it made its way in the parking lot.

My consciousness suddenly pivoted to a faint but fond memory that brought a smile to my lips, an attack of melancholy I hadn't had for some time since that last bout with my life's many hang-ups. Love wronged; love requited. Love lost; love found. Dream faded; dream rekindled. Joy killed; excitement revived.

In my 28 years, that's how I pictured existence: lose some, win some. But sometimes, I allow myself to be extremely optimistic. This has a real power to make living much easier. I take my mistakes not as a loss of a single speck of dignity but as some kind of necessary expense to get somewhere. It is something that is bound to happen even if I usually fail to foresee that it would be incurred. I treat it like an increase in fare. Or paying the fare of a friend whom I bump into on a bus.

At the rate things are going—with our ailing economy, the turbulent political environment and a string of our societal woes, not to mention a series of global crises—who wants to count mistakes as losses? You made a mistake by trusting someone? Learn a lesson! You made the wrong decision? Learn a lesson! And since I do not consider my mistakes as losses, I seldom regret decisions which led to undesirable consequences.

But I must qualify what makes an unregrettable decision. It should be what I thought to be the right option when I made it. Who in his right senses would not opt for a decision that would preserve one's happy existence instead of ending it? So, if I chose a decision that I knew from the very start was wrong and which produced unpleasant results, that's the only time I bang my head against the concrete wall.

Come to think of it, it happens to me quite often, too. When I am made bitter because of my own pride, I lose. When someone is taken away from me because of my naïveté in thinking he would always be with me even if I ignored him, I lose. When I fail to appreciate or even just see the small blessings when they are still there, I lose. When I carelessly do something so trivial yet devastating, I lose.

Indeed, we all have lost some and have won some. It is good to have an inventory of what we have lost and what we have found to replace them.

But some things are irreplaceable. Time is one. A friend is another. Then there is dignity, and trust—the list is endless. But while we are still breathing, it is good to track down how we are doing in this lose-win business. At the end of the inventory, I am sure most of us will come up winners if we learn to consider the seemingly trivial good things as winnings and the huge honest mistakes as lessons. For instance, each time my G-2 pen is returned to me, I feel extremely blessed. Such things make my life more bearable and worth traveling.

Does anybody agree with me?

Monalinda B. Cadiz, 28, got hooked on a government agency at an early age and she has been trying to be "developmental" since then. She gate-crashed a Methodist Sunday service recently and learned to: "Earn all you can; save all you can; give all you can."

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BF follows sound banking practices

LETTERS PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

WE refer to an article in your issue last April 29, titled "BSP urged to probe Banco Filipino Board," written by Elena R. Torrijos which was but a rehash of previous attempts to smear the bank and which were without factual basis.

We deny that Banco Filipino engaged in a common pattern of extending loans to borrower-firms controlled by its vice chair, Albert C. Aguirre, in exchange for overvalued real estate, putting at risk depositors' money.

Albert Aguirre is neither a stockholder nor a director nor officer of the named corporations (Glamor World Inc.; Filipino Vastland, Filipino Ventures Co. Inc., Taurus Land Inc., BF Homes Depot Inc., ProManagers Inc.; CLI Management Corp., Tierrasud Inc. and FBCI Corp). Hence, the assertion that these are controlled by Aguirre is gratuitous.

All loans of Banco Filipino were granted in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations and the tenets of sound banking practices. The bank has not violated any law or Bangko Sentral regulations on DOSRI loans.

All the bank's loans are fully secured with real estate collateral appraised by duly licensed and independent appraisers. The property cited in the alleged complaint of the Korugas as having a value of only P15,000 per sq.m. is in fact a commercial property and its adjoining lots were sold by their owners at P50,000 to P60,000 per sq.m. Banco Filipino was also able to sell a property in the area at P90,000 per sq.m.

Of the nine loans mentioned in the alleged complaint of the Korugas, only six were actually extended. Out of the six, five have been fully paid. The remaining loan is in the process of liquidation.

The officers mentioned in the complaint of the Korugas as having executed affidavits on alleged unlawful borrowing schemes of Banco Filipino are not connected in any way with and are not privy to the procedure adopted by the bank in granting loans. These are former officers of some of the borrowing corporations who were fired from their positions for dishonesty.

Banco Filipino is one of the most solid banks in the country, precisely because of sound and progressive banking practices observed by its board of directors and management. With total resources of P11.8 billion, its capital base of P6 billion is one of the highest, if not the highest, as a percentage of total assets. Its damage claim of not less than P18.8 billion has been progressing despite the dilatory tactics of the defendants.

Ana Maria Koruga has been moving heaven and earth to thwart the effort of Albert Aguirre, as administrator of the estate of Tomas B. Aguirre, to recover from her some $7 million or P371 million. The estate case has nothing to do whatsoever with the operations of Banco Filipino.

Also, some groups have been trying to destabilize Banco Filipino in the light of its victories in its legal cases, particularly its P18.8 billion damage claim. The idea is to destroy the bank and its officers so that it cannot pursue its damage claim anymore.

—FRANCISCO A. RIVERA,
executive vice president and corporate secretary, Banco Filipino,
101 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City

The other side of Adela

I AGREE with Rina Jimenez-David when she wrote that Filipinas have an incredible sense of filial loyalty and devotion, as Adela Catalon showed. Incredible is the word, because in this case she sacrificed the nation for the love of a family member.

I do not wish to speak ill of the dead. Adela worked hard for her family, like thousands of other OFWs. However, I want to point out that had Adela realized where filial piety ended and love of country began, we would not be where we are now SARS-wise. I give her A+ for filial piety but I give her a failing grade in civic responsibility. I am sure she was given the quarantine form to fill up at the airport and as a nursing aide she was aware of the importance of quarantining people coming from countries with SARS.

Her relatives said she was suffering from fever shortly after she arrived, yet she defied quarantine. She did not only go around seeking help for her father (that maybe I can understand) but even attended social events and visited relatives. These show irresponsible behavior, and the nation and the rest of us Filipinos must suffer the consequences.

Sorry, but that is the other side of Adela Catalon.

—CHATS M. BILLANO,
chats@pacific.net.ph

How free is our press?

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

GIVEN the freewheeling articles in many of our newspapers as well as the hard-hitting commentaries on radio and television, it's tempting to think the Philippine press must be one of the freest in the world.

Not quite, according to the first worldwide press freedom index compiled by the Reporters Without Borders (RSF, from the French name Reporters sans frontieres). The index is being released to commemorate World Press Freedom Day, which falls on May 3. (You can get the full list on www.rsf.fr.)

I don't want to keep you in suspense, so let me tell you how we fared: We ranked 89th out of 139 countries.

RSF explains that the index was drawn up by asking journalists, researchers and legal experts to answer 50 questions about a range of possible violations of press freedom. This included censorship, murders or arrests of journalists, state monopolies, punishment of press law offenses.

The global picture is grim. In 16 Latin American countries, for example, journalists can still be sent to jail if found guilty of "insulting" public officials. In Cuba, 30 journalists are in prison, and when RSF activists recently protested in front of the Cuban Embassy in Paris, they were beaten up by embassy guards.

So far this year, 15 journalists have been killed worldwide. Nine were killed in Iraq during the invasion, most of them dying from "friendly fire" of the US-led forces.

Developed Western democracies topped the list for press freedom, with Finland, Iceland, Norway and the Netherlands tying for first place, followed by Canada in fifth. The United States only ranked 17th because of the number of journalists who have been arrested or imprisoned there, mainly for refusing to reveal their sources in court.

RSF notes that rich countries don't have a monopoly on press freedom. The developing countries that had high rankings were Costa Rica (15th), Ecuador (20th), Benin and Uruguay (21st), Chile (24th), South Africa (26th), Namibia (31st), Paraguay (32nd) and El Salvador (33rd).

Our rank of 89th put us behind many Southeast and East Asian countries: Hong Kong (18th), Japan (26th), Taiwan (35th), South Korea (39th), Indonesia (57th), Cambodia (71st) and Thailand (65th).

Neighboring countries with lower ratings than us were: Malaysia (110th), Brunei (111th), Vietnam (131st) and Laos (133rd). The three countries with the lowest ratings in the world were Burma (137th), China (138th) and North Korea (139th). (Singapore wasn't anywhere on the list but I would think they ranked lower than we did.)

We can see the countries that had lower ratings than we do are those where there is tight state control of the media. RSF has many documented cases of imprisonment of Chinese journalists, including "cyberdissidents" or people who maintain websites that carry critical political views.

Press freedom relates as well to the overall peace and order situation in a country. Colombia, for example, ranks 114th because of the war there with drug lords. The Philippines' low rating was due, in part, to the armed conflicts we have. RSF notes, for example, that two radio stations in Mindanao were bombed in 2002.

Last year 26 journalists were murdered worldwide, of whom three were Filipino. The first victim was Benjaline Hernandez, who was on the staff of Atenews, Ateneo de Davao's student newspaper. Hernandez was a member of the human rights group Karapatan and was part of a fact-finding team looking into the situation in Arakan Valley, Cotabato, when she was killed on April 5, together with three other people. The military said she was caught in the crossfire but there are suspicions she was murdered.

The second murdered journalist was Edgar Damalerio of Pagadian City. Damalerio edited the Zamboanga Scribe and was a commentator in a local radio station, DXKP. He tackled many corruption issues. The Damalerio case continues to be the focus of much concern because a key witness was eventually murdered while the main suspect in the assassination was able to escape from jail.

The last case in 2002 was that of Sonny Alcantara, who published a San Pablo City weekly called Kokus and was also a commentator in a local cable television channel. He was gunned down on Aug. 22.

During the Marcos dictatorship journalists faced many threats of arrests, imprisonment and outright salvaging. The situation certainly has improved, but 38 Filipino journalists have lost their lives since the restoration of democracy in 1986, underscoring the fact that the restoration of democratic institutions does not automatically ensure press freedom. Most of the murders have been outside of Metro Manila, reflecting how powerful local political warlords, as well as their lawyers and private armies, can make life very dangerous for local journalists.

It's striking that there is global attention focused on the situation of local journalists, down to the cities of Pagadian, Davao and San Pablo. "World Press Freedom Day" does remind us that we now live in a world where borders are coming down, making press freedom a global concern. I'm thinking SARS here. If the Chinese mass media had been more free to report on the growing problem of "atypical pneumonia" in Guangdong province, SARS could have been contained early enough.

I will resume writing about SARS next week. Meanwhile, readers might want to visit the website of Ateneo's Institute of Philippine Culture (www.ipc-ateneo.org.ph) where resource persons, including myself, can answer questions related to the disease. This will go on till May 2.

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Suicide attack in Tel Aviv kills 4, hurts 49

TEL AVIV—A suicide bomber killed three people waiting to enter a crowded Israeli nightclub early on Wednesday, jarring US plans to present a new Middle East peace plan after a landmark Palestinian vote for reform.

Hours earlier, the Palestinian parliament approved a new cabinet under reformist Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, but Palestinian militants swore to defy his agenda of curbing attacks on Israelis to lay the groundwork for negotiations.

Israeli police and medics said three people were killed along with the bomber and 49 wounded in the early morning attack at "Mike's Place—Blues by the Beach" in Tel Aviv, near the back entrance to the US Embassy.

Blood and body parts smeared the smashed club entrance. The bomber's coat hung from beams over the door with a hand sticking out of one sleeve and one of his severed legs lay on the step.

Police said the bomber detonated his hidden load after trying in vain to push past a security guard into the club. "The place was crowded with young people for a jazz and blues night," said Israeli national police spokesperson Gil Kleiman.

"The security guard prevented a huge catastrophe. I saw people running away in flames, some without skin. It was shocking. Mike's is more of a tourist place," a woman witness who was in a pub next door told Israeli television.

Most of the scores of Palestinian suicide attacks in 31 months of militant violence against Israel have occurred in daytime. The latest assault seemed like a bid to unhinge Abbas's negotiating agenda before it got off the ground.

Washington condemned the suicide attack but said it would not scuttle plans by the international peacemaking Quartet to present the long-awaited peace "road map" now that the new cabinet is in place.

But the bombing promised to throw a cloud over the planned swearing-in on Wednesday of Abbas's cabinet in the West Bank city of Ramallah as it raised the threat of a fierce Israeli military response deep into Palestinian areas as in the past.

Violence also recurred in the West Bank late on Tuesday night when Jewish settlers shot dead two Palestinian gunmen who tried to infiltrate their small outpost, military sources said.

Israel said the violence heightened the onus on the revamped Palestinian leadership to make good on promises to rein in militants, who Abbas said had created "armed chaos" damaging Palestinian hopes of winning international blessing for a state.

"This vicious attack in Tel Aviv serves as a brutal reminder that the Palestinians are continuing with their blood-stained trail of terror," said David Baker, an official in Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's office.

"The new Palestinian government must realize that fighting terror must top their agenda, that this bloodletting against Israeli citizens must stop now," Baker said.

There was no immediate comment from Palestinian officials.

Sharon's government has ruled out moves toward a Palestinian state without an end to militant attacks. *Reuters*

Israel paralyzed by strike

JERUSALEM—Some 700,000 public sector workers launched an all-out strike Wednesday, forcing the closure of Israel's main international airport as well as ports, trains, schools, the stock exchange and government ministries, the Histadrut trade union confederation said.

The strike was called in protest at a draconian austerity plan due to be submitted to parliament later Wednesday by right-wing Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu abrogating the collective agreements that have long governed the public sector in Israel.

Only private businesses were untouched by the strike, with state-owned utilities and many banks also closed by the indefinite industrial action which began at 6 a.m.

The costs of facing down the 31-month-old Palestinian uprising and the ravages of the global slump on Israel's key hi-tech sector have sparked the worst recession in the 55-year history of the Jewish state.

The austerity budget to be put forward by Netanyahu, an outspoken champion of free market economics, foresees a $2.3 billion slash in public spending and tens of thousands of redundancies in the public sector.

It is the first time that an Israeli finance minister has sought to force through budget cuts by legislation rather than a collective agreement with the once all-powerful Histadrut. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

$100M, 90M euros found

BAGHDAD—US forces have found 100 million US dollars and 90 million euros in cash in a Baghdad neighborhood, the US Central Command announced Wednesday. Centcom said in a statement that the funds had been recovered in an area of the Iraqi capital controlled by the 4/64 Armor, 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division between April 23 and 26. It said the unit located 31 containers loaded with the cash which were flown out of Baghdad International Airport on April 27. *AFP*

Trade in humans

BALI, Indonesia—Asia-Pacific ministers wrapped up a three-day people smuggling conference Wednesday saying their combined efforts to combat the "grisly trade" in humans were already paying off and vowing to continue to fight illegal migration. Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda said that the number of illegal migrants being held in Indonesia had plummeted, partly as a result of increased cooperation between countries in the region. *AP*

Bush pushes AIDS help

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush urged US lawmakers Tuesday to approve a five-year, $15-billion campaign to battle AIDS, calling the global war on the deadly disease a "moral imperative. Time is not on our side. So I ask Congress to move forward with speed and seriousness this crisis requires," said the US leader, who unveiled the initiative in his January "State of the Union" speech. Since then, 760,000 people have died from AIDS, 1.2 million have been infected and more than 175,000 babies have been born with the virus, Bush told a White House audience that included AIDS sufferers and African officials. *AFP*

Qatar votes 'yes' in poll

DOHA—Qataris voted overwhelmingly in a Tuesday referendum in favor of plans to give the gas-rich monarchy a written constitution and usher in a Gulf-style democracy, the state minister for internal affairs announced. The constitution would create a separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, although political parties would still not be allowed, in line with the Gulf tribal tradition of looser associations or movements. *AFP*

Bashir denies charges

JAKARTA—Indonesian cleric Abu Bakar Bashir began his defense Wednesday against accusations that he leads a deadly Islamic terror network, saying God would be his judge. "I testify that there is no other absolute ruler, protector or judge except Allah," the white-robed Bashir, who allegedly heads the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network, told the five judges. "There is no source of law except Allah." A calm Bashir denied the accusations and urged the court not to be swayed by domestic or foreign pressure, saying that judges who passed fair verdicts would go to heaven while those who did not would go to hell. *AFP*

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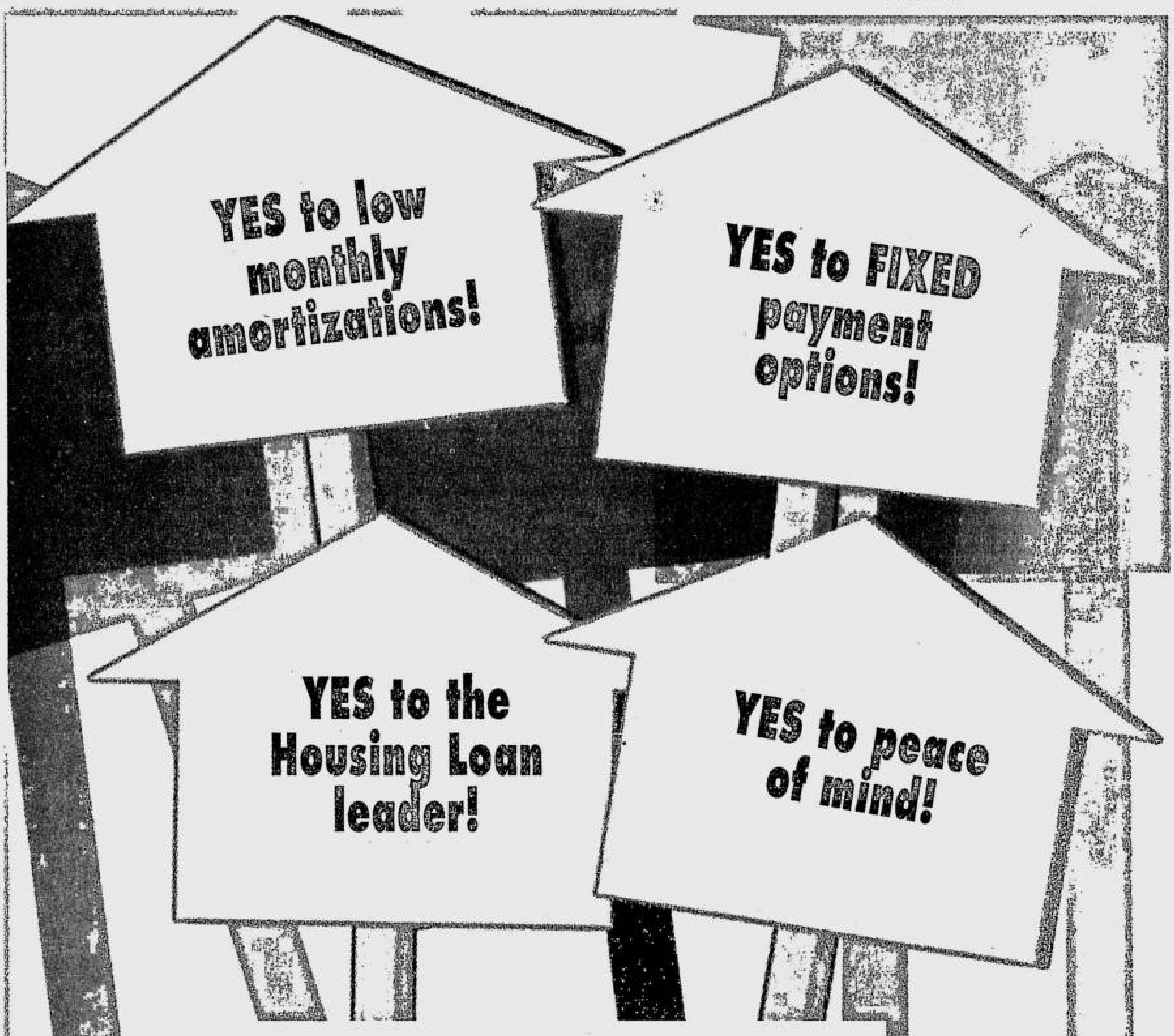
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Daily prints message 'signed by Saddam' urging Iraq revolt

DUBAI—An Arabic newspaper splashed frontpage Wednesday what it said was a handwritten letter signed by Saddam Hussein urging the Iraqi people to rise up against US troops who invaded and ousted his regime.

The message to the Iraqi people was dated April 28, the 66th birthday of the former strongman whose whereabouts are unknown, said Abdul Bari Atwan, editor of the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi.

Atwan told AFP by telephone the one-page letter was received by fax from an undetermined location and signed "Saddam Hussein."

The daily quoted sources close to Saddam confirming that it was his own handwriting and signature.

"The circumstances in which he is living clandestinely do not allow him to do more than put out a written message, given his security considerations," the sources said.

The message says that the US-British military victory "was only possible because of betrayal" and calls on Iraqis "who reject occupation and shame... to rise up against occupation."

"Liberation and victory" is promised.

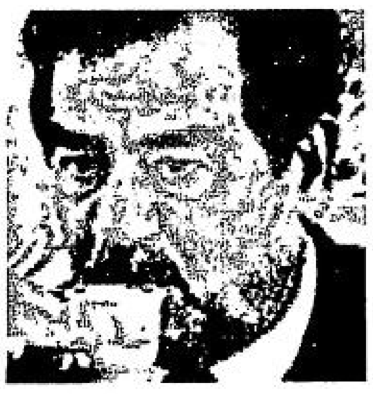
The letter also urges Iraqis to set aside their differences warning that US-installed leaders will not bring freedom.

"Today the sole priority is the expulsion of the miscreant, murderous and cowardly occupier," it says.

"All the countries surrounding you are against your resistance, but God is with you because you are fighting infidelity and you are defending your rights.

"Iraq will emerge victorious as will the honorable people of the nation. We will recover the archaeological treasures they stole. We will rebuild the Iraq they want to divide."

Al-Quds Al-Arabi on Tuesday published a letter from a previously unknown group calling itself Iraqi Resistance and Liberation which said Saddam was still alive and would deliver a message to his country within three days.


SADDAM

On April 18, Abu Dhabi TV aired what it said was footage of Saddam being feted in a Baghdad neighborhood on April 9, the day the capital fell to US forces, and his "last speech" which it said had not been broadcast before. *AFP*

US troops fire on Iraqis again; at least 1 killed

LUJA, Iraq—US troops opened fire on Wednesday for the second time in just over a day on an angry crowd in the Iraqi town of Falluja, near Baghdad, and local people said at least one person was killed.

Maj. Michael Marti, of the US 82nd Airborne Division said that soldiers traveling in a vehicle convoy had opened fire after shots were fired at them from a crowd of people, protesting outside a US command post about the killing of at least 13 Iraqis in the town on Monday night.

People in the crowd threw stones at the convoy, Marti said:

"Then fire came from the crowd, directed at the convoy. It was at that point that they returned fire... It was well-aimed fire."

He said soldiers counted "potentially" two injured Iraqis.

Some local people said they believed as many as four people might have been killed and said the demonstrators had been unarmed. Al-Jazeera television said two died.

"During a demonstration, some youths started bothering US forces... US forces opened fire on the crowd and two civilians were killed and four were wounded," the Arab channel's correspondent, Diyar al-Omari said on air in a telephone call Falluja, 50 km west of Baghdad.

"One was killed for sure," Ziad al-Ara, an aide working for the local Iraqi administration, said. *Reuters*

Bioarms destroyed, says Iraqi scientist

WASHINGTON—A scientist who helped to pioneer Iraq's germ warfare program said that to his knowledge all Iraqi biological weapons were destroyed and no such weapons have been in the Iraqi arsenal recently, ABC's "Nightline" reported on Tuesday.

Nasser Hindawi admitted his role in the creation and production of biological weapons but insisted he had no choice when Saddam Hussein sought his expertise in the 1980s during Iraq's war with Iran, ABC reported.

"We have to work as we are ordered, as soldiers in the battlefield. You cannot say no," Hindawi said in an interview.

Saying no to the fallen Iraqi president was not an option, said Hindawi, who spoke of being tapped to supervise the production of weapons, including anthrax.

Asked what he thought would have happened to him had he refused Saddam's request, Hindawi responded: "Heaven knows. I couldn't imagine. But I couldn't do it—not only for myself, but for the sake of my family."

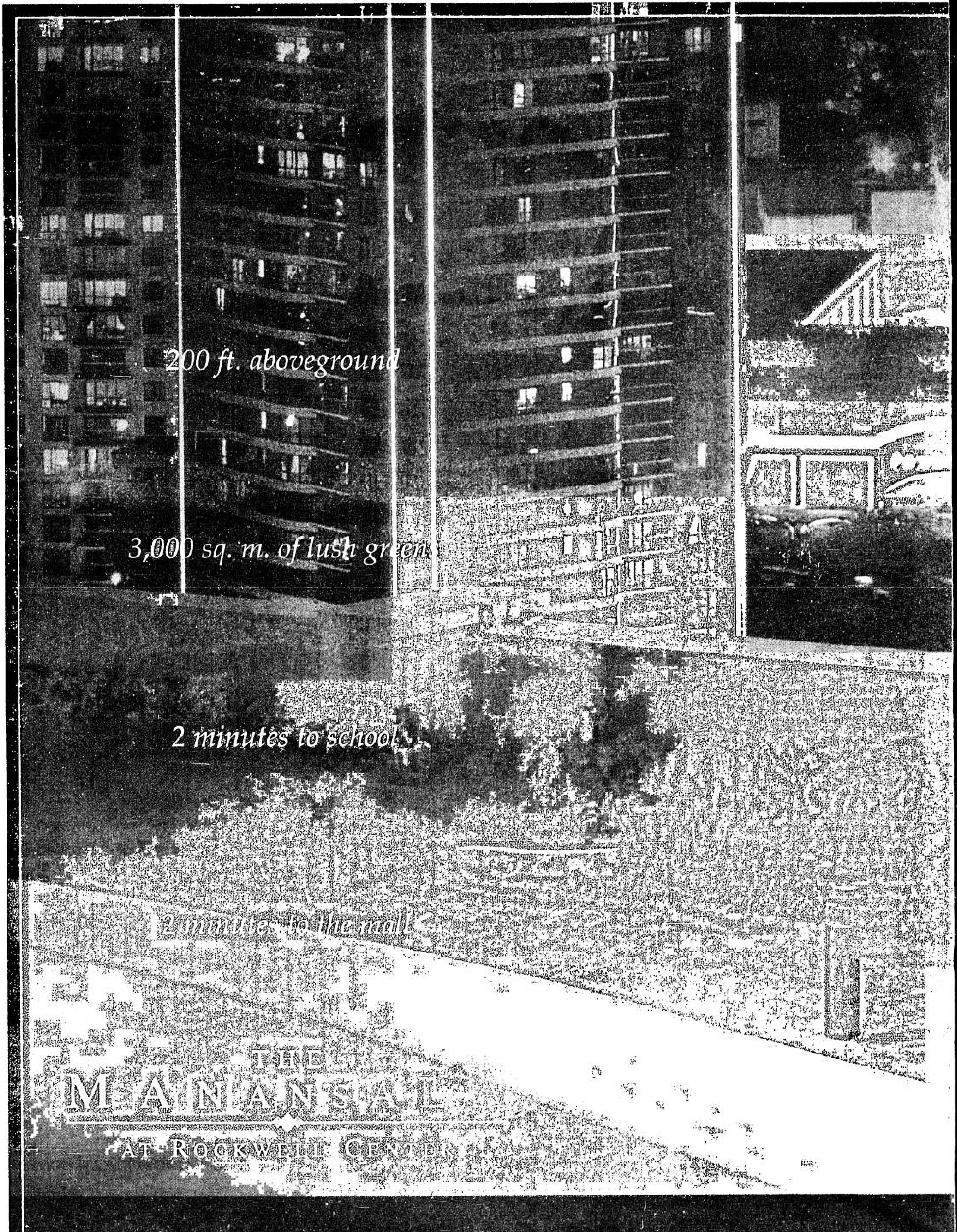
Hindawi is now under the protection of pro-American Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmad Chalabi and has spent several days at Chalabi's Baghdad headquarters conferring with American weapons experts, ABC reported.

Hindawi, who has two sons living in the United States, was detained in 1998 while trying to flee the country, an Iraqi source said at the time. The source said the scientist had violated travel laws and was accused of carrying reports from Iraq's past biological program. Visiting UN inspection teams had met Hindawi "tens of times," the source said.

Hindawi left the weapons program in 1989 but was recalled by Saddam to work as a consultant when UN inspectors arrived after the 1991 Gulf War.

Hindawi told ABC that he and other bioweapons scientists were coached on how to lie to the inspectors.

The report said the scientist was also ordered to conceal how an animal feed protein factory that he had helped to build could also be used to make anthrax. *Reuters*



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US rejects N. Korea demand for concessions

WASHINGTON—The United States on Tuesday rejected North Korea's offer to ditch its nuclear and missile programs for a huge economic and diplomatic payoff, as President George W. Bush met top advisors to consider his next move in the crisis.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said the offer, made at talks in Beijing last week and termed by Pyongyang as a "bold" move, did not go in the right direction.

Bush, who accused the Stalinist state of reverting to "the old blackmail game" last week, consulted envoy James Kelly, the US delegate to the talks, Powell and other top security aides in a so-called principals' meeting, an official said.

"It seemed like an appropriate time for a meeting now that Kelly is back and we have a better idea of what they (the North Koreans) were talking about in Beijing," said the official.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who earlier this month reportedly circulated a memo advocating the complete isolation of North Korea, is abroad, so he was represented by his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Powell testimony

Powell said in testimony to the Senate that North Korea's proposal was "of a kind we have seen previously from them," apparently referring to a 1994 deal under which North Korea received energy and other aid for freezing its plutonium-based nuclear program.

"It is something that of course I believe that as our other friends are interested in, we will study," Powell said. South Korea and China have previously expressed interest.

"But it is a proposal that is not going to take us in the direction we need to go," Powell said, warning: "We will not be intimidated by their claims and threats."

US officials are adamant that they will offer no payoff for North Korea to end its nuclear crusade, which would in their view amount to "blackmail" and a reward for "bad behavior."

They have said that only once nuclear development has verifiably ended will they offer Pyongyang a package of economic and political measures.

"We will not provide them inducements for doing what they always said they were going to do anyway," said Fleischer.

Bush on Tuesday consulted allies Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun in telephone calls and "reiterated his intention to resolve the issue peacefully" and to include Tokyo and Seoul in any future talks with North Korea, the White House said.

New talks

Hours earlier however, North Korea said any new talks would be useless unless Washington moved on its request for a non-aggression guarantee.

"It is quite obvious that as long as the US maintains such stand, the two sides will only waste time no matter how frequently they negotiate and such talks will not be of any help to the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula," North Korea's government newspaper Minju Joson said in a commentary carried by the Korean Central News Agency.

South Korea failed to persuade the North to commit itself to scrapping its nuclear program during cabinet-level talks in Pyongyang, according to a joint communique issued early Wednesday in Seoul.

The talks in Pyongyang, which had stalled over the South Korean demand, ended with an agreement for both sides to seek a peaceful solution to the crisis.

According to US officials, North Korea's proposal entailed an offer to scrap its nuclear weapons and missile programs in return for political, economic and diplomatic concessions.

Powell signaled that the administration intended to address broad aspects of North Korea's behavior, not just nuclear and missile programs.

"North Korea is exporting not only missiles but as we saw in an Australian bust the other day, drugs."

Australian forces

Australian special forces earlier this month seized a North Korean ship and 30 crew members and charged them with smuggling heroin.

"This is a regime that thrives in criminality and that also has to be part of a comprehensive approach to deal with the regime, going well beyond nuclear weapons and missiles but into criminal activities, which we have to spend more time and energy dealing with," said Powell. *AFP*

Italy PM aide gets 11 years for graft

MILAN—A close political and business associate of Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was sentenced Tuesday to 11 years in prison for corruption by a court in Milan.

Cesare Previti, 68, was accused of bribing judges to give favorable verdicts in cases concerning Berlusconi's business interests before the media magnate entered politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Previti, who is a lawmaker with Berlusconi's Forza Italia party and a former minister as well as being Berlusconi's former lawyer, will appeal the verdict, his lawyers announced.

Berlusconi himself is charged with bribing judges in a separate case known as the SME trial, which also involves Previti. He is scheduled to make a statement to the court in that case on Friday.

Six others, including two judges, Tuesday received prison sentences of between six and 13 years in the Previti case, which has lasted almost three years. Another accused, judge Filippo Verde, 75, was acquitted.

Previti immediately denounced the verdict as "judicial persecution."

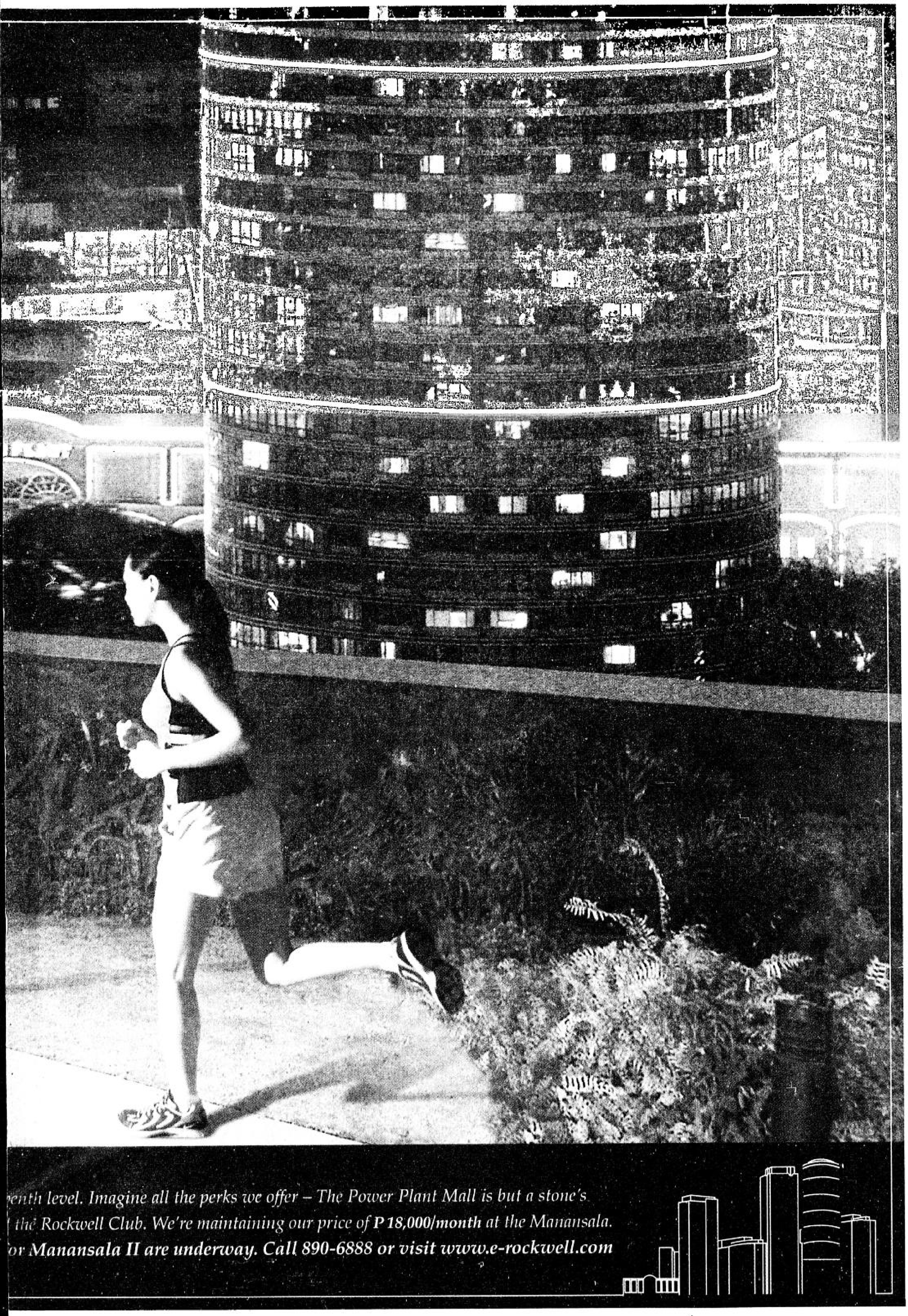
Berlusconi expressed his "personal solidarity as well as that of the Forza Italia" with Previti.

"The politicization of a certain magistrature, aimed at determining our political life, is a problem that must be resolved for the good of the country, for its institutions and for Italian citizens," he said in a statement.

Many observers see the conviction as a condemnation of Berlusconi himself, and the verdict is a hard blow for the government just two months before Italy takes over the presidency of the European Union.

Previti has used various means to escape conviction, including requests for annulment or transfer of the trial, since the start of the proceedings.

He also involuntarily gave his name to a law passed by parliament in November called "save Previti" under which a person accused of a crime can request a change of trial venue if the judges are suspected of lacking impartiality. *AFP*



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NEW EXCISE TAX LAW:

Critical to local automotive industry's growth

WITH the abundance of foreign players, it would seem that the nation's automotive industry is on the path to recovery. Far from it, after years of trying to survive ever-changing revenue regulations that each new administration imposes, the industry is struggling to achieve some semblance of progress like its record sales in 1996.

The ASEAN automobile market registered its highest growth levels in 1996-97 prior to the Asian financial crisis, suffering a slump in the following years. By the end of last year, however, after a five-year recovery period, Malaysia had already surpassed its pre-crisis volume by 127% while Indonesia practically eclipsed its 1996 volume. Thailand is just 30% below its pre-crisis sales level with sales of 409,459 units in 2002. The Philippines, on the other hand, sold only 85,616 units in 2002, roughly 53% of the record sales in 1996.

Not helping alleviate matters in the local automotive industry is the current excise tax structure based on engine displacement. The current taxation system, which was formulated when fuel savings was the primordial concern, is no longer viable in today's scenario where the government needs to generate the much-needed revenue to spur the country's growth.

RR-4-2003 is not the solution.

Efforts to reform the current excise taxation system has led to the creation of Revenue Regulation No. 4-2003 issued by the Department of Finance (DoF) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) which was protested by the local automotive industry. Right from the start, it was clearly evident that RR-4-2003 would not bring remarkable benefits to the government, industry and consumers.

If RR-4-2003 is to be implemented, the resulting situation alone could hardly be considered conducive to the expansion of the market since it will make prices of AUVs and various passenger vans skyrocket to unaffordable levels by as much as 35-50%. That means a basic AUV model with a suggested retail price of P664,679 would fetch a whopping P997,020.

Aside from that, the government will stand to lose a projected P1.3 billion in revenues, erosion of the entire automotive industry, further loss of employment for Filipinos and loss of investor confidence in government policies.

The need for a value-based excise tax.

Following **President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Executive Order No. 156**, a priority measure that seeks the restructuring of the 20-year-old motor vehicle taxation system to a simple, transparent and equitable value-based taxation system, the Senate ways and means committee led by Senator Ralph Recto has sponsored **Senate Bill No. 2517**. The bill has a counterpart version in the House of Representatives under **House Bill No. 5719** filed by Negros Occidental (Western Visayas) Rep. Julio A. Ledesma IV which was approved 125-24 with no abstentions on the third and final reading of the bill.

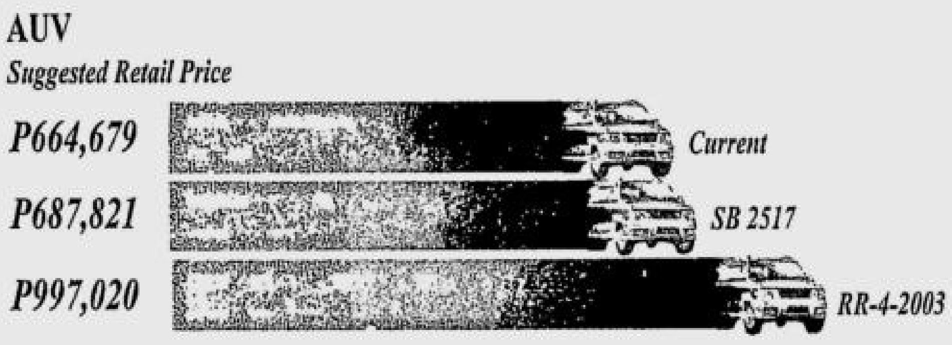
The bill proposes amendments such as a redefinition of the term "automobile" to include almost all vehicles, namely AUVs, SUVs, vans and pickups, the removal of the engine displacement and differentiation according to fuel type, the adoption of a four-tiered value-based system of taxation, and the indexation of the net manufacturer's price (used as base of taxation) once every two years or when an extraordinary peso movement occurs.

Under the proposed value-based system:

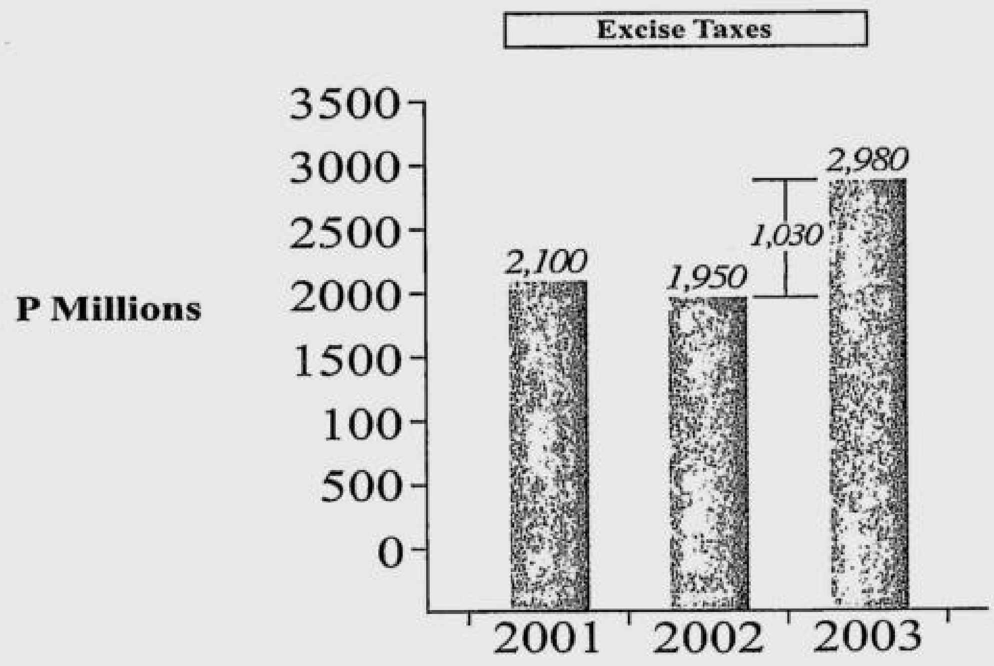
- **Vehicles with a net manufacturer's price of P500,000 and less will be imposed an excise tax of 3%**
- **P15,000 plus 15% in excess of P500,000 for autos between P500,001 and P1 million**
- **P90,000 plus 30% in excess of P1 million for those over P1 million to P2 million**
- **P390,000 plus 50% of value in excess of P2 million for vehicles over P2 million**

A call to pass Senate Bill 2517

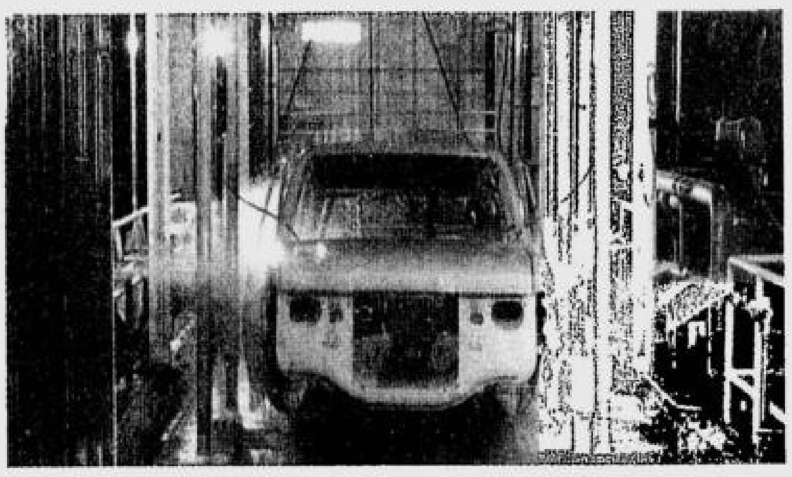
The new Senate Bill 2517, unlike RR-4-2003, will have a minimal impact on the cost of AUVs, the most preferred vehicle of most Filipinos. That means a basic AUV model with a suggested retail price of P664,679 would slightly increase to P687,821. With the new scheme, the government will be able to equitably collect the taxes of automobiles properly.



Immediate passage of the new excise tax bill will expand the tax base, thereby increasing government revenues. New simulations submitted by the DoF showed the revenue measure is expected to bring in an additional P1.2 billion in excise tax, plus about P500 million of VAT, mainly due to the expected 36% improvement of vehicle sales for the year. Whether or not the expansion happens, the government still stands to earn about P1 billion.



The new excise tax bill will result in a win-win situation that will lead to market expansion for the automotive industry, as well as increase investor confidence that will transform the domestic market into a base for export of vehicles and parts. What's more, with a wider choice of car models that's competitively-priced entering the market, more Filipinos will finally fulfill their dream of owning a brand-new vehicle. This increase in economic activity will also translate to more local employment and help sustain more than 77,000 Filipinos in the legitimate automotive industry. When the Senate approves the new excise tax bill, maybe then we can truly say that the nation's automotive industry is on the road to recovery and growth.



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20 Isabela families put in isolation

CABAGAN, Isabela—Gov. Faustino Dy Jr. on Tuesday ordered the isolation of 20 families in Barangays Casibarag Norte and Casibarag Sur here for 14 days amid suspicions that a returning overseas Filipino worker from Hong Kong had contracted the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Relatives and neighbors of the SARS suspect were furious at policemen and health personnel for imposing quarantine on them, saying officials have no concrete basis to impose the order.

The OFW worked for two years in a construction firm in Dubai and later as a family driver in Hong Kong. He arrived here on April 20 and developed high fever, sore throat, severe joint and muscle aches and chills, officials said.

The OFW and his two relatives, as well as the Milagros District Hospital ambulance driver who took him to the Cagayan Valley Medical Center in Tuguegarao City, were placed in isolation rooms intended for probable SARS patients on April 29.

Isolated families

In Cabagan, the isolated families included the OFW's wife, who also arrived from Hong Kong, and two children.

Health workers have been monitoring them for being in immediate contact with the OFW prior to his isolation.

Residents of Barangays Casibarag Norte (pop: 2,458) and Casibarag Sur (pop: 2,354) assailed government officials for isolating the two villages.

The OFW's family has been building their house in Casibarag Sur even though they are still staying at their parents' house in Casibarag Norte.

This prompted health officials to also isolate the OFW family's neighbors in Casibarag Sur.

Most tricycle drivers refused to bring in passengers to the areas for fear that they would be infected by the SARS virus.

Senior Supt. Nelson Nario, Isabela police director, ordered the deployment of more policemen to help the Cabagan police maintain order in the villages and to secure the isolated residents.

Senior Insp. Renato Mallonga, Cabagan police chief, said the families under voluntary isolation have been "generally receptive" to the isolation order.

Mallonga advised villagers not affected by the isolation order to temporarily avoid visiting the areas.

Dr. Lyn de Laza, chief of the regional epidemiology surveillance unit, said the OFW was taken to the Cagayan Valley Medical Center (CVMC) in Tuguegarao City on April 27.

Tests

She said tests showed that the OFW had no viral infection but was found to have bacterial infection.

"Tentative finding is tuberculosis," De Laza said, adding that the OFW was confined at the CVMC for further monitoring.

Dy said families placed under voluntary quarantine would be given relief goods and their health would be regularly monitored.

In Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Joson III ordered a listing of all OFWs in the province as a preventive measure against SARS, according to Dr. Bienvenido de Guzman, provincial health officer.

The move was meant not to discriminate OFWs but to secure the health of residents, De Guzman said.

He also said Joson had assigned an ambulance and a medical team tasked to ferry SARS-suspected cases to and from the hospital where the patients would undergo examination.

He said all government health workers in Nueva Ecija would also be provided with masks. The masks, although not the N95 type prescribed by the World Health Organization, were ordered by Joson from the United States.

In Laoag City, authorities clarified that an employee of the Fort Ilocandia Resort and Casino who came home from a cooking demonstration in Guangzhou, China, was not infected with SARS. *Villamor Visaya Jr. with a report from Estanislao Caldez, Vincent Cabreza and Cristina Arzadon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, and Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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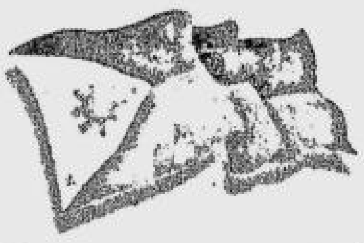

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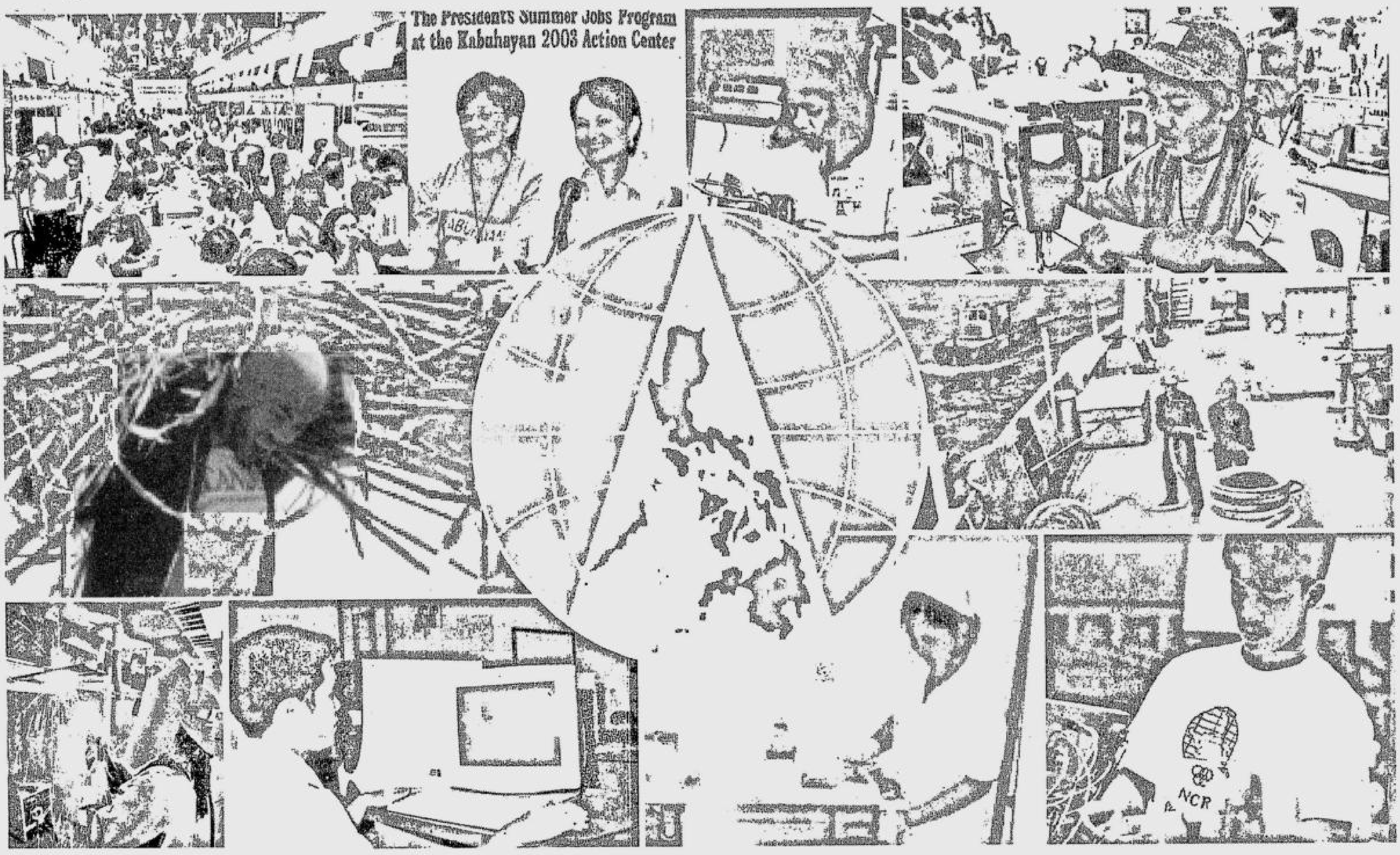
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to formally open the festivities of Labor Day 2003
May 1, 8:00 o'clock in the morning at the lobby of the
World Trade Center, Pasay City

PROGRAM

8:00	Invocation	**Mr. Joselito Manabat**
8:02	National Anthem	**DOLE Choir**
8:04	Introduction of the Guest Speaker	**Usec. Josephus B. Jimenez**
	Message	**Sec. Patricia A. Sto. Tomas**
	Ribbon Cutting	
8:30	Visit to the livelihood booths	

Emcee: **Ms. Minerva Ann Averilla**

Araw ng Paggawa 2003
Ika-10:00 n.u., Mayo 1.
World Trade Center
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Pasay City

PALATUNTUNAN

9:45	Pagtitipon	
10:00	Pagdating ng Pangulo	
10:01	Pambansang Awit	**OWWA Choir**
	Panalangin	**Monsignor Ruperto Fernandez** Kura Paroko, Ermita Church **Prof. Adulrafih H. Sayedy** Tagapangulo, Sharia and Halal Committee Islamic Da'Wah Council **G. Angelito P. Calderon** Pangulo, AFW-LSM
10:05	Pambungad na Pagbati	**G. Democrito T. Mendoza** Pangulo, TUCP
10:08	Pagbasa sa Sama-samang Manipesto ng mga Manggagawa	**G. Victorino F. Balais** Pangulo, PTGWO-TUCP-LSM
10:12	Paglalahad ng Kasunduan ng Construction Industry Tripartite Council	**Kgg. Patricia A. Sto. Tomas** Kalihim Kagawaran ng Paggawa at Paghahanapbuhay
10:14	Pagpapakilala sa Pangulo	**Kgg. Patricia A. Sto. Tomas**
	Tampok na Pananalita	**H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo** Pangulo ng Republika ng Pilipinas
	Pagtatapos ng Palatuntunan	

Gng. Sonia Lipio (TESDA-ACE-TUCP) at **G. Vladimir Tupaz** (TUPAS-LSM)
Mga Guro ng Palatuntunan

Major Labor Day Activities World Trade Center Grounds

Booth	Activity	Products/Services
1-18	**Livelihood Fair**	Curtains; bedsheets; pillowcases; handtowels; Ilocos blankets; ladies', men's and children's RTW; ladies' accessories; stuffed toys; snack food; cold and processed meats; cassava and camote processing; integrated food processing; microfinance programs and services
19-36	**Jobs Fair** *Participating Companies* *Local Employment:* Automatic Centre Cardnet Globalink Employment Services Going Straight/Lets Face It Health Network Inc. Metro Auto Club Corp. Avon Cosmetics People 4 People Jacinto Marketing Corp.	*Vacancies*: Accounting clerks/staff/assistants; data encoders; cashiers; sales coordinators/consultants/representatives/officers; management trainees; warehouse/ furniture assembler; drivers; house detectives; utility helpers; junior accountant; bookkeeper; health aide/consultant; receptionist; beauty consultant; receptionist; manicurist; reflexologist; hair dresser/specialist/ consultant; field interviewer; physical therapist; midwife/ nurses; merchandiser; marketing assistant/account executive; field supervisor; telemarketer; franchise dealer; administrative assistants; customer service associates; I.T. help desk; programmer; purchasing assistants; telephone operators
	Overseas Employment: Krona International Diamond Overseas Manpower Rock Solid Manpower Finest Asia Resources, Inc. Career Planners Specialists *Destinations:* Canada Taiwan Doha, Qatar Dubai, U.A.E. Israel Jeddah, K.S.A. Kuwait	*Vacancies*: Registered nurse; live-in caregivers; nannies; pharmacists; physical therapists; radiology technicians; bricklayers; framers; form workers; cement finishers; construction laborers; factory workers; excavator/backhoe operators; trailer driver; grader operator; land surveyor; tipper truck driver; asphalt plant operator; waiters/waitresses; kitchen crew; sales crew; cashiers; store assistants; food servers; hosts; staff nurse ; electrician; lady security guard; janitress; electronic technician; female swimming trainor; painter; mason; tile setters; respiratory specialist; ortho therapy technicians; window cleaners; x-ray treatment specialists; female x-ray technicians; laborer; female physiotherapist; sales executive officers; female tailor; med tech; pharmacists; CT scan technician; staff midwife; dental assistant; ECG technician; ultrasonogropher; respiratory technician; English teachers; marketing, purchasing, production supply, customer business development, external relation managers; A/C technician; team leaders; auto mechanic; communication engineer; telephone technician
37-42	**Skills Demonstration**	Mechatronics; computer-aided design; Pneumatics; Bartending–cocktails and mocktails; Table setting; Napkin folding–easy and difficult; Table skirting; Floristry; Reflexology; Nail Art
44-49	**Dental and Medical Outreach**	Free blood typing; random blood sugar determination; analgesics; cough and cold remedies; antibiotics; and multi-vitamins
50	**SSS**	Social security information (private sector workers)
51	**GSIS**	Social security information (public sector workers)
52	**Philhealth**	Health services information
53-55	**Labor Relations Legal Clinic**	Counseling and referral
56-61	**Pag-IBIG**	Low-cost housing information
64	**ECC**	Employees compensation program information
65-66	**LSM**	Tupas, TUCP, AFW

A Tribute to the Great Filipino Worker by Local Artists, a free concert, starts at 7:00 p.m. at the Quirino Grandstand, Rizal Park.

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SARS BRIEFS

SARS suspect shuns advice

BULAN, Sorsogon—Health officials here appeared powerless against a domestic helper from Hong Kong who refused to go through quarantine procedures after she arrived with coughs in Barangay Obrero on Friday. Although not showing any symptoms of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), except for her coughs, the domestic helper, initialed RG, should have been quarantined for 14 days, Dr. Estrella Payoyo, Bulan municipal health officer, said. On Saturday, a day after her arrival, RG reportedly left Barangay Otavi for Manila together with her husband and three children. ***Emir Gamis, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

SARS suspect cleared

TABACO CITY—The Department of Health in Bicol has cleared a 56-year-old overseas Filipino worker from Germany of SARS after she went into quarantine. The woman, who arrived in this city with her niece and a German national friend on April 13, voluntarily submitted herself for medical checkup after suffering from high fever the other day. But her body temperature returned to normal the following day, said Dr. Glenda Fortuno of the DOH-Bicol. Mayor Alex Burce said news of the OFW's condition caused panic among residents of his city and neighboring towns in Albay, resulting in the increase in prices of surgical masks and alcohol. ***Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

A different SARS strain

VICTORIA, Laguna—Another strain of SARS has temporarily crippled trade in this small town. Mayor Renato Rebong said a case of "Sensationalism and Reckless Storytelling," not the deadly SARS virus, was the cause of the slowdown of economic activities in his town. Rebong reacted to earlier reports that one of his constituents was afflicted with SARS and was brought to a hospital in Manila where the patient allegedly died during the weekend. Since the story, which turned out to be false, came out, Rebong said many local businesses recorded a significant decrease in their sales. This town is widely known for its fresh eggs, *balut*, steamed duck and shrimps cooked in coconut milk. ***Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

No mask, no confession

SAN PABLO CITY—All priests serving the Diocese of San Pablo, Laguna were directed by their bishop not to hear "face to face" confessions and not to "anoint the sick" without wearing protective masks to prevent the spread of SARS. In a circular letter dated April 30, to be read on May 4 during Mass, Bishop Francisco San Diego said that when priests administer the sacrament to the sick with "face masks," they should immediately clean their hands with alcohol. The prelate also directed parishioners not to kiss the hands of priests after the Mass. ***Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

Backdoor entry feared in Quezon

LUCENA CITY—Quezon board member Dante Cadiz said during a recent privilege speech that if the provincial government does not act decisively, Quezon would have SARS-carrying individuals. Board member Eladio Pasamba, who represents several towns facing the Pacific Ocean, said that with the reported planned banning of Chinese nationals in the country, "the once lucrative human smuggling in north Quezon would be revived through the unabated intrusion of Chinese fishing vessels in the area."

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Labor Day demand: Oust DOLE chief

MILITANT labor groups in Cebu and Bicol called for the ouster of Labor Secretary Patricia Santo Tomas for allegedly failing to protect workers' interests.

About 200 members of the Alyansa sa mga Mamumuo sa Sugbo-Kilusang Mayo Uno (AMA-SUGBO-KMU) staged a rally Monday at the regional office of the Department of Labor and Employment to dramatize their dissatisfaction on the way Sto. Tomas handles the department.

Arman Perez, provincial coordinator of Bayan Muna in Cebu, said they are also demanding the abolition of the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board (RTWPB).

Perez said the group was pushing for the legislated wage increase of P125 in the private sector and P3,000 for the government workers.

In Legazpi City, workers said nothing has changed for them during the past 100 years. It was 100 years ago in 1903 when hundreds of thousands of demonstrators stormed Malacañang Palace, considered the first ever labor rally staged in the Philippines.

In a joint statement, workers belonging to the Association of Democratic Labor Organizations-Kilusang Mayo Uno (ADLO-KMU), Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap, Anak-Pawis, Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan and other militant organizations, condemned contractualization and the massive layoff of workers in different companies.

About 62,000 Bicolanos cannot find jobs and 520,000 have no sufficient jobs while thousands are outside the country as overseas contract workers.

They also hit the increasing cases of harassment of leaders and members of different labor unions in the region.

Joel Lotivio, ADLO-KMU regional chair, said they held simultaneous Labor Day rallies in Legazpi City; Daet, Camarines Norte; Sorsogon capitol grounds; Plaza Quezon in Naga City and near the Masbate City Cathedral.

In Central Luzon, almost 6,000 workers have lost their jobs due to shutdowns and retrenchments from January to March.

Most of at least 5,978 workers who lost their jobs were women and from Bulacan and Pampanga.

The current employment displacement figures were 19 percent higher compared to the reported 5,006 workers laid off for the same period last year, a report from the Department of Labor and Employment regional office here showed.

Of those displaced in the first quarter this year, at least 178 men workers and 367 women workers were assisted by DOLE in claiming nearly P20 million in separation pay packages.

Bulacan had the biggest number of affected workers at 2,193. Pampanga came second at 1,879 workers, mostly from factories inside the Clark Special Economic Zone.

Bataan placed third on the heels of closure and forced leave schemes at the Bataan Export Zone, the forerunner of economic zones in Asia. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau; Joyce Mejillano, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

2 fires claim lives of 5 in Albay, Cebu City villages

FIVE persons died when two fires struck a village in an Albay city and another village in Cebu City.

In Tabaco City, four children were found dying under a bed of the house where they were trapped by fire in Purok 3, Barangay Sto. Cristo, Tuesday night.

Brothers Patrick, 10, Cedric, 5, Ryan, 3 and Oliver, 1, all surnamed Jardin, were found with signs of life under a bed inside a room in their house after the 30-minute fire.

In Cebu City, a person died while more than 200 houses were destroyed in a two-hour fire that hit the densely populated Barangay Ermita on Monday evening.

Cebu City fire marshall Supt. Esmael Codilla identified the fatality as Restituto Sorono, 70, who was trapped inside his house when the fire broke out at 7:28 p.m. Monday.

At least P7 million worth of property were destroyed in the fire, Codilla said.

Senior Insp. Renato Obsun, Tabaco City fire marshall, said they rushed the children to the nearby Taftworks General Hospital but they were declared dead on arrival.

Obsun said the fire started from a kerosene lamp inside the house.

Jerson Grecia, 26, live-in partner of the victims' mother, Elvie Jardin, and father of the four young Jardins, said the children and Elvie were all asleep when he left their home briefly to pick up a shirt which he left at his mother's house near theirs.

When he returned home, he found the house locked, prompting him to look for Elvie.

After about 30 minutes, he heard a commotion, which prompted him to go back home. Upon his return, he saw that the house was on fire.

"When the firemen, my neighbors and I entered our house I saw that they were all dying," Grecia, a pedaled tricycle driver, told the INQUIRER in the dialect.

All their efforts came too late.

"Had the door not been locked, they might have survived," a neighbor said.

Codilla said they were looking into a report that a group of drug addicts holding a pot session started the Cebu City fire.

The fire victims were temporarily housed at the Ermita Sports Center. Among the houses destroyed in the fire were those owned by Ermita barangay captain Felicisimo Rupenta, his three councilors and the house of former city councilor Felixberto Rosito. *Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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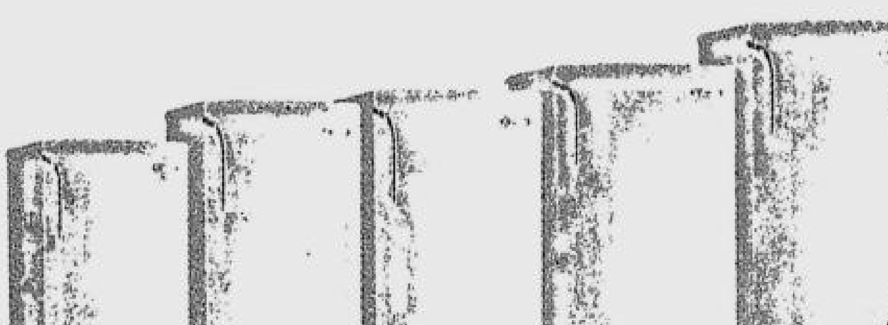
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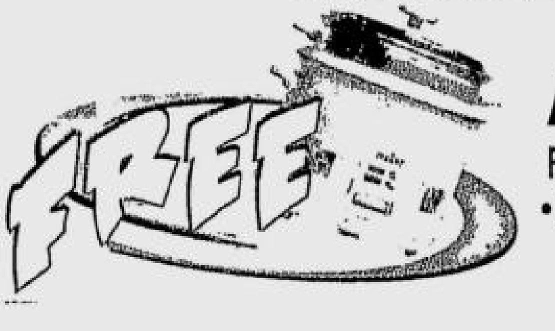

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel ◆ Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

LAGUNA'S 'TURUMBA'

A festival of health, healing, prosperity

By Romulo Ponte
Pakil, Laguna

MELINDA de Luna, a resident of San Pablo City who works as a bank employee in Santa Rosa town, was still childless at 32. Her doctor had expressed pessimism about her having a safe pregnancy after tumors were found in her womb.

De Luna and her diabetic husband had long been hoping and praying to have a child. The woman had even gone to novenas in Dolores town in Quezon, to Bishop Alfredo Obviar in Tayabas, Quezon before he died, and to several other places known for bestowing graces and miraculous cure.

One day in April, a childhood friend and classmate, Aileen Fernandez Enriquez, 38, invited De Luna to join her in the street dances and prayerful chants of the Turumba Festival in Pakil, Laguna. Weeks later, De Luna noticed changes in her body.

She gave birth to a boy and all her tumors were removed without complications. Her son, JD, will be 3 years old on June 2.

De Luna's story is among those of hundreds of devotees who come out yearly for the seven-day Turumba Festival, also known as the "Seven Lupi" or Fiesta of the Blessed Virgin of Turumba, which commemorates the seven sorrows or seven wounds that pierced the heart of Mary.

Longest

Pakil boasts of its longest Turumba Festival, which kicked off on April 11, according to Iñigo G.Vito, a retired professor, author and church officer, who who has been working for the parish for 46 years. This year, as in previous years, the pilgrims coming to Pakil are estimated at 500,000.

Enriquez, a businesswoman and devotee of the Virgin Mary of the Turumba for seven years, said she had been receiving graces for her only son Raymond Christopher, 15.

Catherine Ann Brooks, 22, of Majayjay town, joined the festival in May last year to ask God through the Virgin Mary to let her pass the board exams for chemical engineers slated in November that year. A graduate of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City, she did not take any review course but simply studied on her own at home—and prayed.

Brooks not only passed the exams but also placed sixth among all examinees nationwide.

A younger sister, Katelyne, 21, is joining the festival with the special intention of passing the board exams in business administration.

Wilma Ramirez, 54, of Sariaya, Quezon, said she and her family were among the thousands of people who came regularly to Pakil from April to Sept. 8, to thank God for all the blessings they had received through the years.

"Despite our poverty, all my children have gone to school and finished their studies," Ramirez said.

Felicidad de Ramos, 57, also of Sariaya, said she and her family would also swim in the "miraculous" waters of the Panghulo-Nuestra Señora De los Dolores swimming pool at the heart of the town.

"Among the graces granted us by the Lord, through the Blessed Mother, is our acquisition of a passenger jeepney and (good) health for all of us in the family," De Ramos disclosed.

'Seven Lupi'

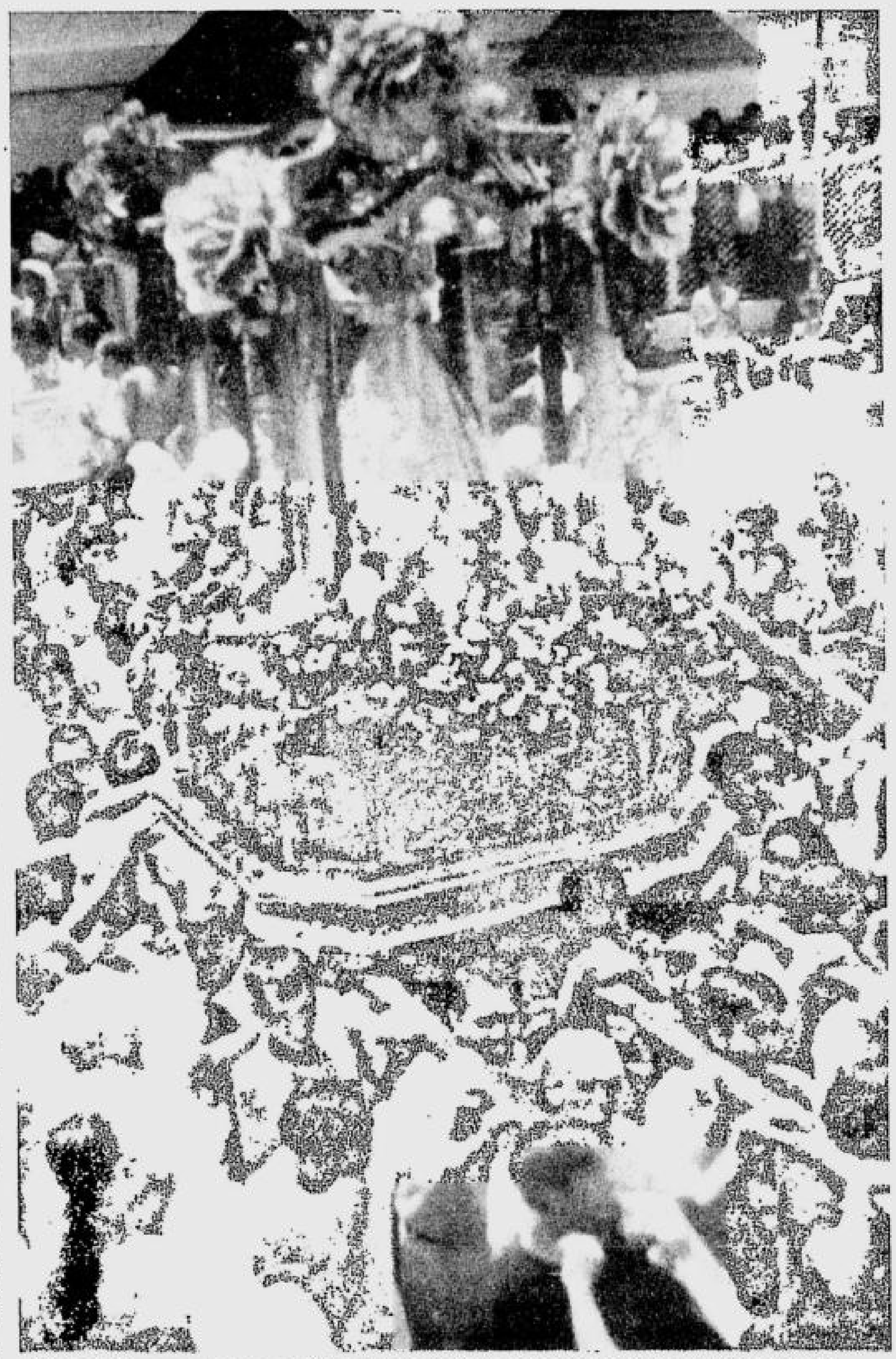
The Turumba, by tradition, starts with the 1st Lupi of the Feast of Biyernes de Dolores, which falls on the Friday before Palm Sunday. This is followed by the 2nd Lupi, this year, on April 22, known as Pistang Martes or the Tuesday immediately following Resurrection Sunday.

The 3rd Lupi is the three-day Pistang Biyatiko, which falls on April 28-30. This is the most attended fiesta, according to Vito. Individuals and families coming from Quezon, Laguna, Bulacan and elsewhere usually come a day before or at dawn of April 28 for the three-day sojourn to Pakil.

Vito said this year's celebration made the local residents, as well as Church and municipal officials, extremely busy as they had to cater to the needs of thousands of visitors, and had to ensure the orderly, solemn and meaningful celebration of the fiesta.

The activities included attending a series of Masses and novenas to the Blessed Virgin of Turumba, ritual dances, procession and swimming at the Panghulo pool.

Vito, a former parish council president and now chair of the evangelization committee, said both the Church and the government shared resources to prepare cultural presentations, musical programs and other activities to provide entertainment and education for thousands of transients.


DEVOTEES carry the image of the Blessed Virgin of the Turumba in a procession in Pakil, Laguna. PDI PHOTO

The 4th Lupi is the Pistang Biyernes, which falls on May 9. Three days later,, the Araw ng Pakil or the Pista Pakilina is celebrated.

The 5th Lupi 5 is the Pistang Linggo on May 18; 6th Lupi, the Pistang Pag-akyat, on May 30, and the 7th Lupi, the Pistang Pagpanaog, on June 8.

The Santacruzan called "Ahunan sa Ping-as" (climbing up the Ping-as mountain) is held on May 24.

On Sept. 14, the Pistang Domingo delos Dolores is held in commemoration of the finding of the miraculous statue of the Birheng Hapis (Our Lady of Sorrows) in 1788.

Peace messages

Msgr. Jose D. Barrion, the parish priest of Pakil, invited the pilgrims to the series of festival activities and Masses with continued prayers "for peace in our country and various corners of the earth giving special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, the Queen of Peace."

Questions have been raised as to why each year, most of those who come for the Turumba and are too eager to take a dip in the cold, fresh spring pool are from various places of Quezon. Someone said many believed that the miraculous spring or swimming pool is the outer end or outlet of a big source of water that is located in Quezon. He did not specify which site he was referring to.

THE BLESSED Virgin of the Turumba PDI PHOTO

Vito dismissed the theory as "very improbable" because Pakil was too remote from any town in Quezon. But a geographical map showed that Quezon and Laguna are so close to each other that they share the same mountain ranges of the Sierra Madre.

For the devotees, their stay in Pakil will never be complete without swimming in the Panghulo pool where, according to a legend, the Blessed Virgin was seen walking one moonlit night.

Devotees would all crowd into the continuously flowing pool, making it a point to bathe seven separate times to recall Mary's seven sorrows.

They would also not miss bringing home with them several containers of water, which, according to some accounts, could serve as cure for various ailments when accompanied by deep prayer to the Lord through the Blessed Virgin.

Blessings

Pakil residents have long held the tradition of having a priest bless the pool during the first Lupi on April 11. The image of the Virgen de Turumba is also carried in a procession that day.

In the past, the Church took responsibility for maintaining the pool, Vito said, but since 1903, when the implementation of the doctrine of the separation of Church and state began, the pool has been given to the government for management, with the Church vowing to help ensure the festival's success.

The pool earns around P1.5 million yearly in entrance and rental fees, which the government uses for maintenance and various needs, Vito said.

He said the Turumba Festival helped augment the income of the municipality, as well as the income of local residents. It also brought about unity of Church and state necessary for making preparations for a possible influx and hence, the accommodation of devotees.

The activities served to enrich the social and cultural life of the residents who had been looking for ways and means to sustain the religious atmosphere of the occasion, thus ensuring that the devotees' sojourn became even more meaningful, inspiring and spiritually enriching, Vito said.

Labor Day started in Chicago

By PDI Research

MODERN day celebrations of May 1 as a working class holiday evolved from the struggle in 1886 of American workers for an eight-hour work day.

But Labor Day's origins can be traced to pagan Europe which held festive celebrations of the first spring planting on the first of May.

In 1881, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions was formed in the United States. Three years later, the group passed a resolution decreeing that "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor from and after May 1, 1886."

Although some employers complied with the deadline, many did not. So on that day, demonstrations were held across the United States. The biggest crowd, estimated at 80,000, converged in Chicago.

The heavy turnout scared Chicago business leaders who called on police to crack down on the demonstrators. The dispersal left several workers dead on May 3.

To protest the police action, a meeting was called in the Haymarket Square the following day.

The protest turned violent when someone threw a bomb into the ranks of the police, killing one officer and injuring others. When it was over, seven policemen were killed while an undetermined number of workers were either killed or hurt.

Eight workers were arrested. Seven were subsequently sentenced to death. The eighth man was meted out 15 years in prison. Three were eventually hanged. One committed suicide. The remaining three were pardoned.

At the Paris Congress of the Second Socialist International in 1889, May 1 was declared the international working class holiday in commemoration of the Haymarket Martyrs.

In the United States, Labor Day is celebrated not on May 1 but on the first of September to reject any identification with communism.

In the Philippines, May 1 as Labor Day was made into law in 1913 although it was unofficially celebrated first in 1903.

Union Obrera Democratica, the country's first labor federation, organized the 1903 celebration.

The UOD was established on Feb. 2, 1902, with Union de Litographicos y Impresores de Filipinas members at its core.

UIF was organized by the "Father of Philippine Labor," Isabelo de los Reyes.

In the first celebration in the country, more than a hundred thousand workers marched on Malacañang to demand better working conditions.

On May 1, 1980, the Kilusang Mayo Uno was organized to spearhead the fight for workers' rights during the dark days of the Marcos dictatorship. It was founded by seven federations and about 100 independent local unions representing about 50,000 workers.

With its emergence, the labor movement in the country was divided into two groups: one, composed of moderate unions like the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines; and two, composed of the militant and nationalist unions under the KMU.

Following the split among the ranks of KMU in 1993, the militant labor forces were further subdivided with the birth of the Bukluran ng Manggagawa para sa Pagbabago of the late Filemon "Popoy" Lagman in 1995.

Last year, the TUCP celebrated at the Araneta Coliseum where the President was the guest speaker. The KMU and BMP staged rallies at Mendiola.

Protection vs SARS part of non-wage package

By Blanche S. Rivera

LIKE most Filipinos, workers are scared of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.

Dropping the usual demand for a wage increase, the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines is expected to ask President Macapagal-Arroyo today to support a 12-point non-wage package that includes the protection of local and migrant Filipino workers against SARS.

In a manifesto with four other moderate labor groups, the TUCP demanded additional medical benefits and insurance package for workers due to the onslaught of SARS in the country.

TUCP spokesperson Alex Aguilar said that government and private agencies should "take the appropriate precautionary measures" to address the vulnerability of workers to the mysterious ailment.

This should include the availability of free masks in the workplace and an education campaign on how to be safe from SARS, Aguilar said in a phone interview.

The government has ruled out a wage increase or any financial benefits for workers as a Labor Day package, opting instead to put up a jobs fair and medical and legal clinics at the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

Labor, pro-Erap groups to hold Mendiola rallies

From page A1

Estrada, detained for two years now on charges of plunder, said he personally wished that his supporters rather not "waste time and effort" staging mass actions. But he said "I can't stop them" if they still want to.

"I just appeal to them to be calm and sober and keep their rallies peaceful," he told the INQUIRER.

Some 30,000 marchers will join the commemoration of the Edsa Tres revolt of 2001, according to Herman Tiu Laurel, convenor of the Edsa Tres Commission. They will hold a rally at Mendiola.

The Kilusang Mayo Uno, Bayan, Bayan Muna, Gabriela and other militant organizations are mobilizing 50,000 members for their rallies in Liwasang Bonifacio and Mendiola.

Red alert

Malacañang does not see a repeat of the attack on Malacañang by Estrada supporters or the mobilization of crowds in the same magnitude of the failed Edsa III, but it has placed the Presidential Security Group (PSG) on red alert.

"We believe that our people have learned the lesson that there is no use for such kind of actions," presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said. "If ever there are those who will [make] similar demonstrations, their numbers will be less."

Bunye also said that the Palace had received reports that certain rally organizers, whom he did not identify, are recruiting demonstrators for a fee.

He said government security forces were prepared to deal with any eventuality in today's Labor Day celebrations.

"Our police forces are ready with their riot control groups and other authorities are prepared as well," Bunye said over state radio dzRB.

At the Palace, soldiers belonging to the elite PSG are very much visible in their urban camouflage uniforms, packed ammunition vests and belts, and rifles slung on their shoulders.

Even PSG men at the technical inspection center inside the Malacañang grounds, who normally wear *barong*, are in battle uniforms.

"We're on red alert," a soldier said. A PSG official said that the red alert had been in place since April 28.

For the protests, the Western Police District will deploy at least 800 operatives in Manila.

WPD spokesperson Gerry Agunod said the Don Chino Roces (formerly Mendiola) Bridge near Malacañang and the United States Embassy would be placed under tight guard and protesters would not be allowed to get "too near."

Members of the police civil disturbance management units have been instructed to watch out for "saboteurs" in the wake of reports that pro-Estrada supporters are planning to create mayhem during the rallies, officials said.

Cynthia Villarin, secretary general of the pro-Estrada People's Movement Against Poverty (PMAP), belied reports that her group was out to disrupt the rallies.

"There's no truth to that. That's just a product of General (Reynaldo) Wycoco's imagination," she said, referring to the National Bureau of Investigation director, whom she claimed was the source of the reports.

Ms Macapagal is scheduled to address organized labor at the Labor Day celebrations to be held at the World Trade Center in Pasay City.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said that the Chief Executive would announce non-wage benefits ranging from social services and tax exemptions to relief measures for dislocated workers.

Sto. Tomas said that the President would also announce appointments from the labor sector for tripartite bodies like the National Labor Relations Commission. *With reports from TJ Burgonio and Jerome Aning*

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P8,495 LESS 500 P7,995	Skin Beige, Green & White Color			

	6.5Cu.Ft. 185 Liters	LG	Brand N	Brand S
P9,495 LESS 800 P8,695	Metallic Color	•GROSS:7Cu.Ft. NET:6.5Cu.Ft. •Extra Large Freezer •Magic Crisper	•GROSS:6.5Cu.Ft. NET:6Cu.Ft. •P9,399	•GROSS:6.5Cu.Ft. NET:6Cu.Ft. •P8,998
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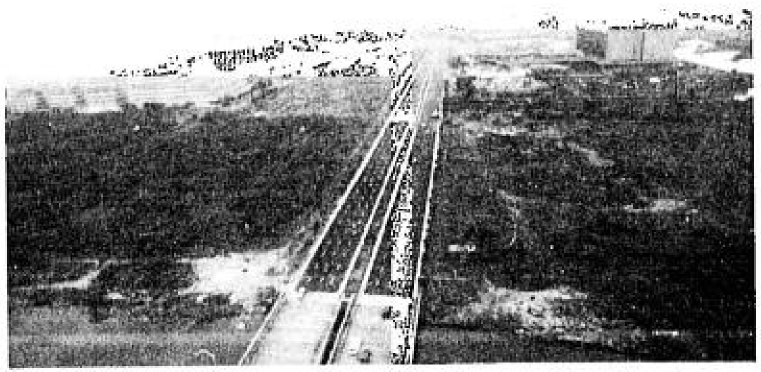

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Is indoor Air Safe to breathe?

Not always.

You think indoor air is cleaner and safer than the air outdoors? Think again. Pollutants that can cause common ailments like eye, nose and throat infections, allergic rhinitis or cough and colds (which when unchecked can lead to severe asthma attacks, bronchitis, pneumonia and even lung cancer) dwell freely inside your home, office or the mall.

We spend about 90% of our time indoors, that's why we need to learn and be conscious of the facts of indoor air pollution.

Is your home free from indoor air pollutants?

To check for air quality problems in your home take note of health problems that appear after you move to a new residence, remodel or refurnish your home, treat your home with pesticides or if smoking is allowed inside your home. If you think that you have symptoms that may be related to your home environment, discuss them with your doctor or your local health department to see if they could be caused by indoor air pollution.

Another way to judge whether your home has or could develop indoor air problems is to identify potential sources of indoor air pollution. Although the presence of such sources does not necessarily mean that you have an indoor air quality problem, being aware of the type and number of potential sources is an important step toward assessing the air quality in your home.

A third way to decide whether your home may have poor indoor air quality is to look at your lifestyle and activities. Household activities like cooking can be significant sources of indoor air pollution. Short-term activities like painting, paint stripping or engaging in maintenance and hobby activities such as welding, soldering or sanding can generate high levels of pollutants.

Finally, check the ventilation in your home. Signs that can indicate your home may not have enough ventilation include moisture condensation on windows or walls, smelly or stuffy air, dirty air-cooling equipment, and when areas where books, shoes, or other items become moldy.

What about buildings and other indoor public places?

One can institute measures to ensure reduction of indoor air pollutants in their homes, making indoor air there safer and cleaner. But the quality of indoor air inside public buildings is harder to control. Your favorite restaurant may seem very cozy but it may not have enough space or ventilation to allow air to circulate.

Poor air quality in some buildings can be caused by:

1. presence of indoor air pollutants;
2. poorly designed, maintained or operated ventilation system; and
3. poorly planned buildings.

In the US, there is such a thing as ***sick building syndrome.*** If the people who occupy a building's space begin to show symptoms that do not fit the pattern of a particular illness or difficult to trace from any specific cause, it may be brought about by indoor air pollutants. You better be aware of these symptoms:

- Dry or burning mucous membranes in the eyes and throat
- Sneezing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Fatigue or lethargy
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Irritability
- Forgetfulness

In some cases, problems begin as workers enter their offices and diminish as they leave. Other times, the symptoms continue until the illness is treated.

Know your indoor air pollutants.

In houses or buildings the following pollutants make the simple act of breathing dangerous: second-hand smoke (environmental tobacco smoke), formaldehyde from pressed wood products, other organics from building materials, household products such as cleaning materials, insecticide spray, air fresheners, paints, adhesives, copying machines, photography and print shop supplies, biological contaminants from dirty ventilation system or water-damaged walls/ceilings/carpets.

Inside your own home, you should be conscious of biological contaminants, which can be caused by poor maintenance or housekeeping, water spills and inadequate humidity control. These, in turn, cause excessive concentration of bacteria, viruses, fungi (including molds), dust mites and animal dander. The presence of these pollutants can cause symptoms in allergic individuals and play a key role in triggering asthma.

Indoors and outdoors, second-hand smoke is bad for you.

Second-hand smoke a.k.a. environmental tobacco smoke is one of the most serious air pollutants. This vile pollutant is a combination of exhaled smoke and the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe. Second-hand smoke affects the passive or non- smoker as much as the one who is actually smoking. When non-smokers stay in a smoky room for an hour, they can inhale as much cancer-causing Nitrosamine as they would by smoking 10-15 cigarettes. A non-smoker exposed to the smoke of 20 cigarettes per day has twice the risk of lung cancer compared with someone who's not exposed to cigarette smoke. ***It is scary to know that there are over 4,000 compounds, of which more than 40 are known to cause cancer in humans and many of which are strong irritants found in second-hand smoke.*** This only goes to show that banning tobacco smoking inside your homes, working area or malls is justified.

Smoke spreads through an entire room in an hour. The tiny size of smoke particles allows them to remain suspended in the air for a long time. Sadly, at present, there is no cost-effective filtering system for removing cigarette smoke form the air. The most effective way to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke in the home is to eliminate smoking there.

In public places, prohibiting smoking indoors or limiting smoking to designated areas that have been especially designed to prevent smoke from escaping to other areas of the building are two options that will effectively protect non-smokers. If an area is designated for smoking, it must meet several conditions:

1. The designated smoking area/room must be enclosed. The simple separation of smokers and non-smokers with a common air space, may reduce, but not eliminate non-smokers' exposure to second-hand smoke. Non-smokers are still exposed to re-circulated smoke or smoke drifting into non-smoking areas;
2. Air from the smoking room area should be directly exhausted to the outside by an exhaust fan
3. Air from the smoking room/area should not be re-circulated to other parts of the building.

How do indoor air pollutants harm our body?

Pollutants are constantly inhaled into the lungs and absorbed into the bloodstream. The exposure to air pollutants produces harmful effects on the respiratory system resulting in different kinds of lung diseases like bronchitis, bronchial asthma, emphysema, etc. As a result of chronic exposure to polluted air, the permanently damaged lungs become more vulnerable to infection. Its effects could be similarly seen on other organs like the heart and blood vessels, causing high blood pressure, heart disease and other related diseases.

We can make indoor air safe to breathe.

If and when you suspect that your indoor air may be polluted because of health or comfort problems you can do the following:

- Observe and record the health and comfort problems closely (run a random survey or ask around the other offices/homes if the problem occurs in a building)
- Report and consult your family or office physician. You might also want to see a pulmonologist.
- Call the local health department or air pollution control agency to conduct an inspection of the building, particularly its ventilation system.
- Work with the others who share the same indoor air/environment to establish a smoking policy that eliminates involuntary non-smoker exposure to cigarette smoke.

An effective way to improve the indoor air quality in your home or office is to increase the amount of outdoor air coming indoors. Opening windows and doors, operating window or attic fans when the weather permits, or running a window air conditioner with the vent control open increases the outdoor ventilation rate. For particular pollutants, here's what you can do:

- ***ETS or Second-Hand Smoke*** - Do not smoke or do not permit others to smoke indoors. If this can't be avoided, provide an exclusive area for smokers that is enclosed and has a separate ventilation system disposing of the smoke to an open air-area.
- ***Carbon Monoxide and Nitrogen Dioxide from kerosene, gas stoves or automobile exhaust*** - Keep gas appliances properly adjusted to decrease the amount of emissions and never idle cars inside the garage.

Organic gases from paints, paint strippers, wood preservatives, aerosol cleansers/disinfectants, stored fuels/automotive products, hobby supplies, dry-cleaned clothing – Use household products according to manufacturer's directions and make sure you have plenty of fresh air when using these products; throw away unused or hardly-used containers safely; keep these out-of-reach of kids and pets.

Pesticides from household insecticides, termiticides and disinfectants – Mix or dilute them outdoors; apply only in recommended quantities; use non-chemical methods of pest control whenever possible.

Lead from paints, contaminated soil or dust – If your work or hobby involves lead, change clothes and use doormats before entering your home.

Awareness and commitment to keep our indoor air clean and safe for everyone can go a long way and will make all of us breathe easy. Let us do our share.

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SC ends Meralco's legal bid to avoid refund

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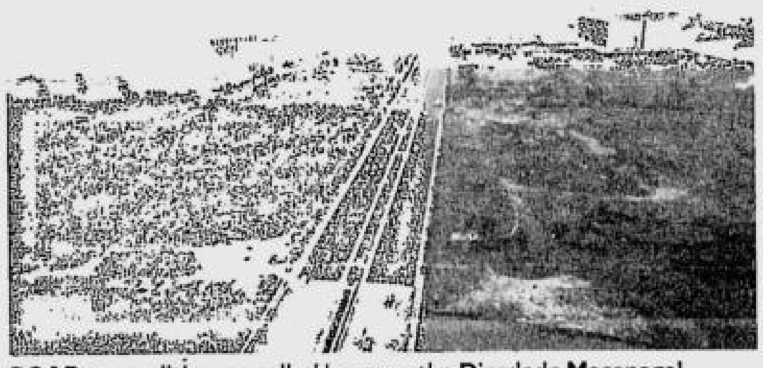

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Is indoor Air Safe to breathe?

Not always.

You think indoor air is cleaner and safer than the air outdoors? Think again. Pollutants that can cause common ailments like eye, nose and throat infections, allergic rhinitis or cough and colds (which when unchecked can lead to severe asthma attacks, bronchitis, pneumonia and even lung cancer) dwell freely inside your home, office or the mall.

We spend about 90% of our time indoors, that's why we need to learn and be conscious of the facts of indoor air pollution.

Is your home free from indoor air pollutants?

To check for air quality problems in your home take note of health problems that appear after you move to a new residence, remodel or refurnish your home, treat your home with pesticides or if smoking is allowed inside your home. If you think that you have symptoms that may be related to your home environment, discuss them with your doctor or your local health department to see if they could be caused by indoor air pollution.

Another way to judge whether your home has or could develop indoor air problems is to identify potential sources of indoor air pollution. Although the presence of such sources does not necessarily mean that you have an indoor air quality problem, being aware of the type and number of potential sources is an important step toward assessing the air quality in your home.

A third way to decide whether your home may have poor indoor air quality is to look at your lifestyle and activities. Household activities like cooking can be significant sources of indoor air pollution. Short-term activities like painting, paint stripping or engaging in maintenance and hobby activities such as welding, soldering or sanding can generate high levels of pollutants.

Finally, check the ventilation in your home. Signs that can indicate your home may not have enough ventilation include moisture condensation on windows or walls, smelly or stuffy air, dirty air-cooling equipment, and when areas where books, shoes, or other items become moldy.

What about buildings and other indoor public places?

One can institute measures to ensure reduction of indoor air pollutants in their homes, making indoor air there safer and cleaner. But the quality of indoor air inside public buildings is harder to control. Your favorite restaurant may seem very cozy but it may not have enough space or ventilation to allow air to circulate.

Poor air quality in some buildings can be caused by:

1. presence of indoor air pollutants;
2. poorly designed, maintained or operated ventilation system; and
3. poorly planned buildings.

In the US, there is such a thing as *sick building syndrome*. If the people who occupy a building's space begin to show symptoms that do not fit the pattern of a particular illness or difficult to trace from any specific cause, it may be brought about by indoor air pollutants. You better be aware of these symptoms:

- Dry or burning mucous membranes in the eyes and throat
- Sneezing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Fatigue or lethargy
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Irritability
- Forgetfulness

In some cases, problems begin as workers enter their offices and diminish as they leave. Other times, the symptoms continue until the illness is treated.

Know your indoor air pollutants.

In houses or buildings the following pollutants make the simple act of breathing dangerous: second-hand smoke (environmental tobacco smoke), formaldehyde from pressed wood products, other organics from building materials, household products such as cleaning materials, insecticide spray, air fresheners, paints, adhesives, copying machines, photography and print shop supplies, biological contaminants from dirty ventilation system or water-damaged walls/ceilings/carpets.

Inside your own home, you should be conscious of biological contaminants, which can be caused by poor maintenance or housekeeping, water spills and inadequate humidity control. These, in turn, cause excessive concentration of bacteria, viruses, fungi (including molds), dust mites and animal dander. The presence of these pollutants can cause symptoms in allergic individuals and play a key role in triggering asthma.

Indoors and outdoors, second-hand smoke is bad for you.

Second-hand smoke a.k.a. environmental tobacco smoke is one of the most serious air pollutants. This vile pollutant is a combination of exhaled smoke and the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe. Second-hand smoke affects the passive or non- smoker as much as the one who is actually smoking. When non-smokers stay in a smoky room for an hour, they can inhale as much cancer-causing Nitrosamine as they would by smoking 10-15 cigarettes. A non-smoker exposed to the smoke of 20 cigarettes per day has twice the risk of lung cancer compared with someone who's not exposed to cigarette smoke. ***It is scary to know that there are over 4,000 compounds, of which more than 40 are known to cause cancer in humans and many of which are strong irritants found in second-hand smoke.*** This only goes to show that banning tobacco smoking inside your homes, working area or malls is justified.

Smoke spreads through an entire room in an hour. The tiny size of smoke particles allows them to remain suspended in the air for a long time. Sadly, at present, there is no cost-effective filtering system for removing cigarette smoke form the air. The most effective way to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke in the home is to eliminate smoking there.

In public places, prohibiting smoking indoors or limiting smoking to designated areas that have been especially designed to prevent smoke from escaping to other areas of the building are two options that will effectively protect non-smokers. If an area is designated for smoking, it must meet several conditions:

1. The designated smoking area/room must be enclosed. The simple separation of smokers and non-smokers with a common air space, may reduce, but not eliminate non-smokers' exposure to second-hand smoke. Non-smokers are still exposed to re-circulated smoke or smoke drifting into non-smoking areas;
2. Air from the smoking room area should be directly exhausted to the outside by an exhaust fan
3. Air from the smoking room/area should not be re-circulated to other parts of the building.

How do indoor air pollutants harm our body?

Pollutants are constantly inhaled into the lungs and absorbed into the bloodstream. The exposure to air pollutants produces harmful effects on the respiratory system resulting in different kinds of lung diseases like bronchitis, bronchial asthma, emphysema, etc. As a result of chronic exposure to polluted air, the permanently damaged lungs become more vulnerable to infection. Its effects could be similarly seen on other organs like the heart and blood vessels, causing high blood pressure, heart disease and other related diseases.

We can make indoor air safe to breathe.

If and when you suspect that your indoor air may be polluted because of health or comfort problems you can do the following:

- Observe and record the health and comfort problems closely (run a random survey or ask around the other offices/homes if the problem occurs in a building)
- Report and consult your family or office physician. You might also want to see a pulmonologist.
- Call the local health department or air pollution control agency to conduct an inspection of the building, particularly its ventilation system.
- Work with the others who share the same indoor air/environment to establish a smoking policy that eliminates involuntary non-smoker exposure to cigarette smoke.

An effective way to improve the indoor air quality in your home or office is to increase the amount of outdoor air coming indoors. Opening windows and doors, operating window or attic fans when the weather permits, or running a window air conditioner with the vent control open increases the outdoor ventilation rate. For particular pollutants, here's what you can do:

- ***ETS or Second-Hand Smoke*** - Do not smoke or do not permit others to smoke indoors. If this can't be avoided, provide an exclusive area for smokers that is enclosed and has a separate ventilation system disposing of the smoke to an open air-area.
- ***Carbon Monoxide and Nitrogen Dioxide from kerosene, gas stoves or automobile exhaust*** - Keep gas appliances properly adjusted to decrease the amount of emissions and never idle cars inside the garage.

Organic gases from paints, paint strippers, wood preservatives, aerosol cleansers/disinfectants, stored fuels/automotive products, hobby supplies, dry-cleaned clothing – Use household products according to manufacturer's directions and make sure you have plenty of fresh air when using these products; throw away unused or hardly-used containers safely; keep these out-of-reach of kids and pets.

Pesticides from household insecticides, termiticides and disinfectants – Mix or dilute them outdoors; apply only in recommended quantities; use non-chemical methods of pest control whenever possible.

Lead from paints, contaminated soil or dust – If your work or hobby involves lead, change clothes and use doormats before entering your home.

Awareness and commitment to keep our indoor air clean and safe for everyone can go a long way and will make all of us breathe easy. Let us do our share.

Source: www.epa.gov and www.who.int

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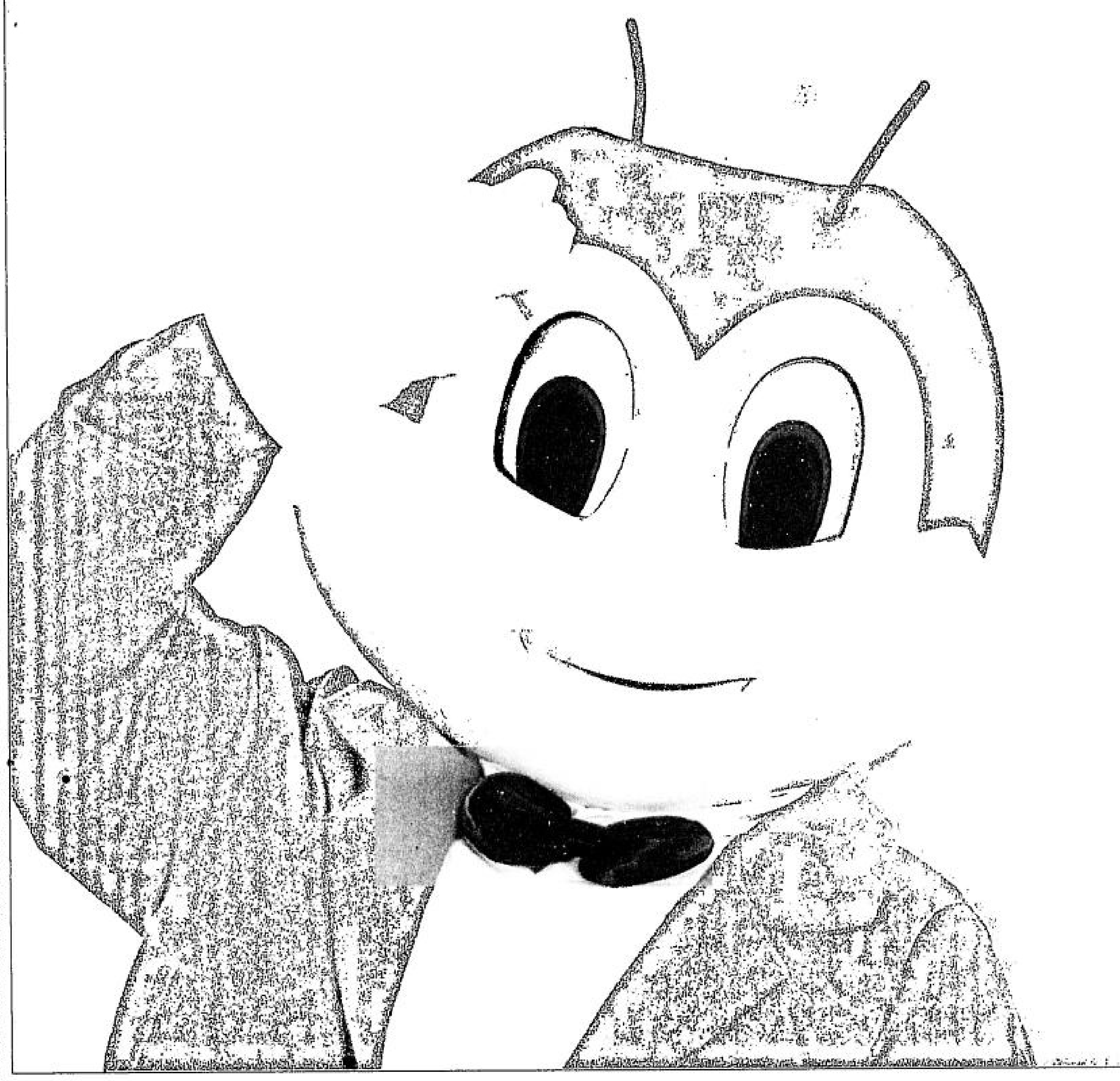

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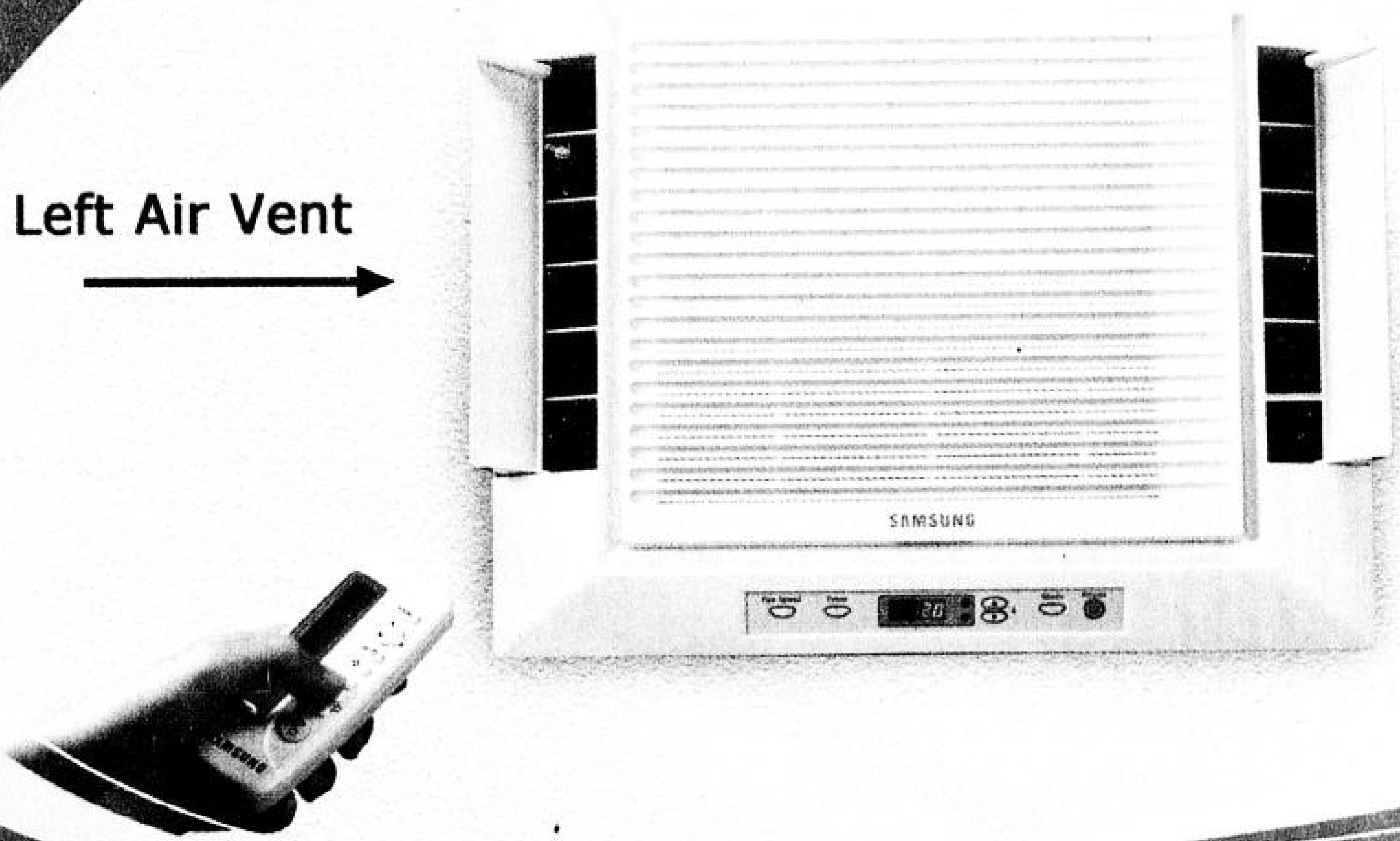

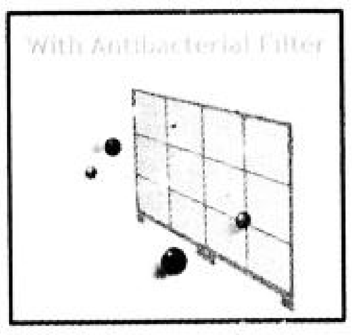

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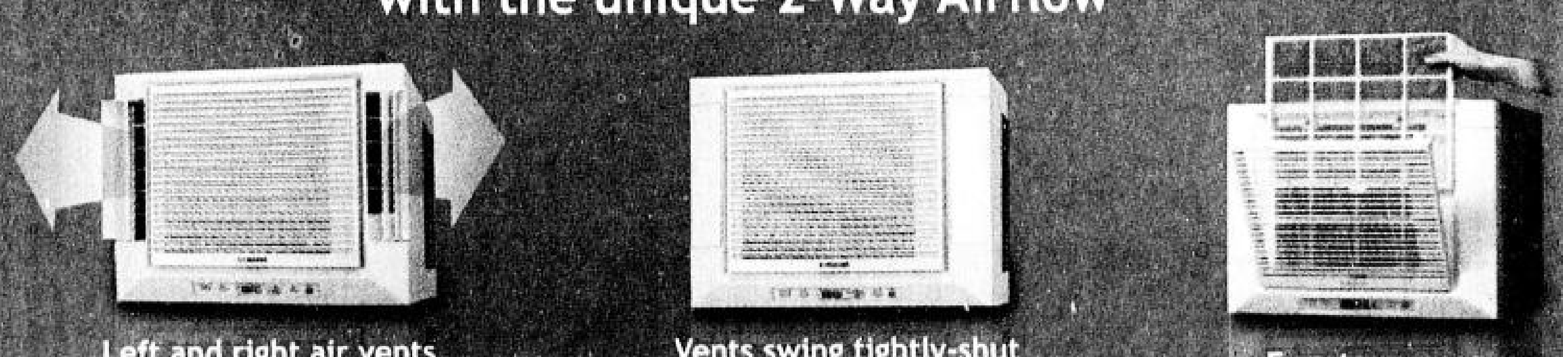

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Editor **Abelardo S. Ulanday**

20-day reprieve for Manila depot

By Jerome Aning

THE FACILITIES of Caltex and Petron at the Pandacan oil depot will stay open—at least for 20 more days—after two Manila regional trial court judges yesterday issued a temporary restraining order, preventing Mayor Lito Atienza and Manila City Hall from shutting down depot operations.

But another RTC judge has denied Shell's petition for a TRO due to lack of merit.

In a phone interview yesterday, Atienza said that to be fair, he would allow Shell to continue operations in the depot while the case is being heard.

In a statement yesterday, a Pilipinas Shell official revealed that the City of Manila will issue business permits to the three oil companies "as soon as possible."

Bobby Kanapi, general manager for external affairs, yesterday said that Shell would "continue to operate its Pandacan oil facility" on behalf of its customers.

Kanapi said that the TROs granted to Caltex and Petron are "equally applicable to Pilipinas Shell, in light of the similarities of the issues and facts" surrounding their petition for TRO.

Judges Reynaldo Ros and Guillermo Purganan of Manila regional trial court branches 33 and 42 said that Caltex and Petron would suffer grave injustice and irreparable injury if the ordinance were implemented.

But in his three-page ruling, Judge Oscar Barrientos of RTC Branch 26 upheld the Manila ordinance closing down Shell's facility at the oil terminal.

Judge Barrientos described the move of Manila council members as "a valid exercise of police power that seeks to ensure the health, public safety and general welfare of the people in the area."

Judges Ros and Purganan ordered City Hall to refrain from committing or performing any and all acts that would cause Caltex or Petron to stop its operations, or which would in anyway jeopardize their operations at the Pandacan terminal.

In his two-page decision, Judge Purganan agreed that a fuel shortage would ensue if Petron were stopped from operating while the case is being heard.

In a phone interview, Atienza lauded Judge Barrientos' ruling denying Shell's appeal for a TRO. But he said that they would respect the TROs issued to Caltex and Petron.

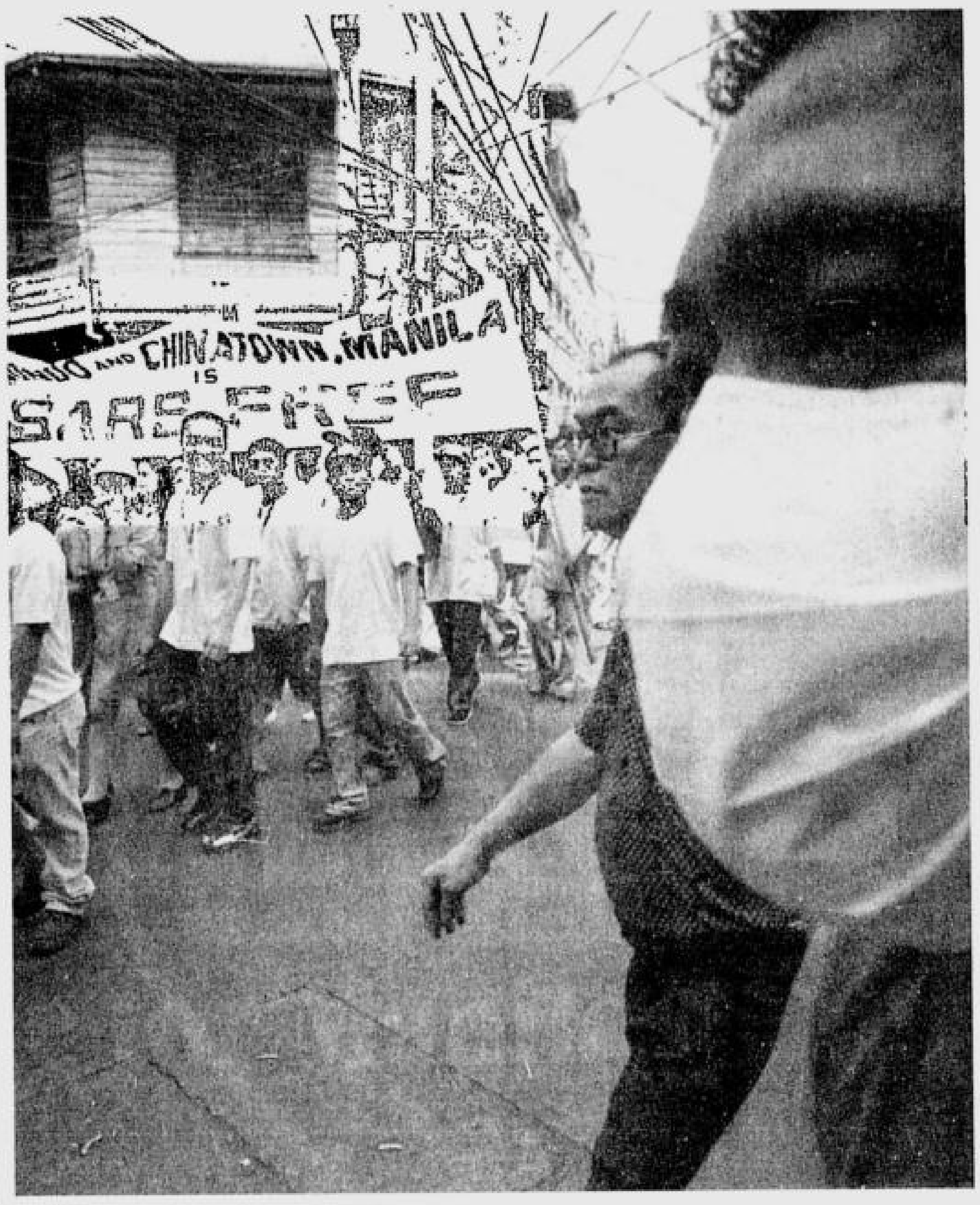
City Ordinance No. 8027 took effect on midnight Wednesday with the expiration of the Memorandum of Agreement between City Hall and the oil firms, allowing the latter to continue operating on a scaled down basis.

The ordinance converts the 33-hectare site of the depot from an industrial zone to a commercial zone.

But Atienza still urged the oil firms to comply with the provisions on security and safety enumerated in the MOA, which the oil firms had agreed to undertake.

The provisions include the dismantling of 28 fuel tanks near the residential areas and the erection of a "green" buffer zone surrounding the facility and between the residential area.

"Even if the case is pending in court, we appeal to the oil firms to fulfill their promise to ensure the safety and security of the Pandacan residents by showing genuine desire, faith and committment to do so," he told the INQUIRER.



CHINESE-FILIPINO businessmen and residents of Manila's Chinatown district take part in a rally declaring their community "free of SARS." Rumors that the dreaded disease has claimed the life of a boy in Chinatown enraged community elders and city officials (see story below).

JOAN BONDOC

LATE SPORTS

Shabu rocks PBA anew

By Marc Anthony Reyes

A SECOND straight drug scandal rocked the PBA last night after the pro league announced Ginebra's Alex Crisano has been found positive for shabu.

The burly, heavily tattooed Barangay Ginebra slotman was immediately slapped an indefinite suspension.

The 6-foot-7 Crisano added to the list of PBA players who had taken banned substance.

The announcement came five days after the league bared Jimwell Torion was found to have also used shabu after a game in Cebu.

Commissioner Noli Eala, visibly irked and shaken, said the league plans to expand the scope of the drug testing wherein all eight urine sample taken during regular games will be checked for shabu/Ecstasy and marijuana.

Since the random testing started two months ago, the PBA tests only four of the eight samples taken from the players who are selected by raffling off their jersey numbers.

League officials also said they will eventually adopt a new drug testing procedure which will include the collecting of hair samples from players selected.

"It would yield more accurate results because traces of banned substance can be flushed out of the person's urine in a few days' time," said Dave Coros of the PBA media bureau.

Coca-Cola beat Shell, 95-81, in the second game to raise its record to 7-5. Shell fell to 3-10.

In the game proper last night, Patrick Fran hit a three-pointer, while Jimmy Alapag split his charities in the final minute as Talk N Text defeated Alaska, 89-88.

More sports on A25-A28

Atienza: No SARS in Chinatown

By Jerome Aning

MAYOR Lito Atienza yesterday declared Manila's Chinatown free of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and denied reports that a 12-year-old resident of the district had died of the disease.

Atienza led a march in Binondo, San Nicolas and parts of Tondo, Sta. Cruz and Divisoria—which comprise Chinatown—to calm down nervous residents.

"Chinatown is SARS-free," Atienza said. "There is no truth to the report that there has been a SARS victim here. It's just a malicious rumor concocted by those who have nothing better to do with their time."

The boy who reportedly died of SARS had been examined by medical experts who declared him free of the disease, according to City Hall.

Rumor of the boy's death was widely circulated through text messages and by word of mouth. It was even picked up by some newspapers in Chinatown.

United States officials also announced that those who have business with its embassy in Manila would be asked to fill up a health screening checklist to address public health concerns over the SARS threat.

"The screening checklist is being implemented to address the public health concerns of the many people who spend time in waiting rooms within the embassy as they conduct business with us," US officials said in a statement yesterday.

The conduct of the health screening checklist started yesterday. Embassy officials in Manila said that this is being done in all US missions around the world.

Acting Consul General Ted Allegra said that the checklist is meant to secure the embassy from the threat of disease.

"Well over 2,000 people visit the embassy everyday from all corners of the Philippines ... We take our service reputation seriously," Allegra said. "While visitors are here, we want to make the environment as safe for the public as it can possibly be."

In Quezon City, barangay officials are now required to report to health authorities all residents who have gone abroad recently.

City health chief Dr. Ma. Paz Ugalde said that barangay units should work closely with district offices of the health department in monitoring the whereabouts of these individuals.

She also reminded city residents to observe proper hygiene, avoid crowded places and refrain from making non-essential travels to countries with verified cases of SARS.

Meanwhile, the cities of Caloocan, Valenzuela, and Mandaluyong, as well as the town of Navotas, have been conducting information campaigns on SARS.

In Caloocan, Mayor Rey Malonzo encouraged the public to fight SARS by strengthening their immune systems through exercise, instead of wearing gas masks.

Malonzo noted that not all residents can afford to buy expensive gas masks, and suggested instead a good exercise program. *With reports from Norman Bordadora, Agnes Donato, Nelson Flores and Anne Luisa Villarico*

Gap between minimum wage, living cost widens

By Agnes Donato

THE GAP between what a worker earns and what he and his family need to spend to survive on a daily basis has widened by almost 19 pesos, according to a militant group yesterday.

Citing a Department of Labor and Employment report, the group Anakpawis said that the daily minimum wage has remained at P280 (including the P30 Emergency Cost of Living Allowance).

But a family of six living in Metro Manila needs at least 557 pesos to survive daily. This is almost 19 pesos bigger than last year's cost of living, which was pegged at P538.18.

Anakpawis chair Rafael Mariano said that the cost of living computation included P173 for food requirements and P384 for other needs.

"Filipino workers are forced to go overtime and tap other possible sources of income to make both ends meet because of very low wages and skyrocketing costs of basic commodities and services," Mariano said.

Earlier, the government announced that it would not give any pay hike for workers this Labor Day.

Anakpawis maintained that the gap between minimum wage and cost of living is also high in other parts of the country.

Sammy Malunes of Anakpawis yesterday called on government to address labor issues such as wage hike, job security and labor rights. *With reports from Dewey Joseph Yap and Charlene Tordesillas.*

Vicencio gets to be mayor anew

By Anne Luisa Villarico

AMADO Vicencio may have to assume the post of Malabon City mayor after the Court of Appeals yesterday issued a 60-day temporary restraining order in his favor.

Associate Justice Hakim S. Abdulwahid of the Court of Appeals' ninth division signed the TRO, lifting the 60-day preventive suspension order on Vicencio.

Vicencio was suspended over a graft charge involving a piece of property in Tanza, Navotas.

The CA also ordered Waldo Flores, senior deputy executive secretary of Malacañang, the Department of Interior and Local Government, and Councilors Edilberto Torres and other opposition councilors, to answer the petition.

But Councilor Torres questioned the TRO, saying it was "defective."

According to a legal counsel, Vicencio's petition was "moot and academic" since it was issued without comments from the respondent, Torres said.

Vice Mayor Mark Allan Jay Yambao said he would step down as acting city mayor and "abide by the TRO since it is a lawful order."

What if Ping Lacson wins?

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

SENATOR Panfilo "Ping" Lacson is the 2004 presidential candidate of the "united opposition."

Hey, there! Why does united opposition have to be in quotation marks? Is it because he's an *alanganin* candidate?

By *alanganin*, I mean he's not yet a full-fledged opposition candidate.

***

Kidding aside, Lacson's victory in the 2004 polls would spell defeat for "enemy" kidnappers and "enemy" drug traffickers, and enemy journalists and public relations people.

Enemy is the opposite of friendly.

***

In the unlikely event that Lacson wins, Mary Ong, a.k.a. Rosebud, Chief Supt. Reynaldo Berroya, Chief Eduardo Supt. Eduardo Matillano, Land Transportation Office and former PNP chief Roberto Lastimoso, and Col. Victor Corpus, and others who have crossed him had better disappear from the country.

Otherwise, they might disappear from the face of the earth.

Lacson would not be magnanimous in victory.

***

Lacson is a petty soul. He showed his pettiness several years ago when, after taking over as Philippine National Police chief, his first order of business was to sack Chief Supt. Jose Lalisan, his classmate at the Philippine Military Academy, as director of the Southern Tagalog region.

Lalisan had hardly warmed his seat as chief of the Police Regional Office 4 when he was relieved.

If Lacson and Lalisan are PMA "mistahs" (classmates), why did Lacson sack Lalisan?

***

You wouldn't believe the story until you heard it from their other mistahs.

When they were fresh PMA graduates, taking up the Philippine Constabulary basic course in Camp Panopio, Quezon City, Lalisan accidentally shot Lacson in the abdomen.

Lalisan was toying with a newly issued pistol at their quarters when he aimed the gun at a door locker. He didn't know the gun was loaded. The bullet hit Lacson who was at the time changing clothes behind a door locker.

***

"*Kung bakit pa kasi nagbibihis siya, Mon, na nakatago, pareho naman kaming* lalake (Why did he have to hide while changing clothes when we are both men)," said Lalisan recalling that incident in 1971.

Lalisan said he had learned a big lesson from that incident and had never played with a gun even if it's empty.

But Lacson could not forgive Lalisan for giving him a hole in the abdomen after all those years, even if it was an accident.

You want a guy who has that kind of mentality in Malacañang?

***

I have been exonerated on my allegations about Director Ricardo Macala of the Bureau of Corrections.

Macala has been suspended for 90 days by Malacañang to prevent him from influencing an investigation into charges of grave misconduct.

"Grave misconduct" charges cover unexplained wealth; the rigging of bids to supply food at the National Penitentiary; toleration of smuggling of liquor, drugs and guns into the maximum security compound by his close relatives; appointment of close relatives to key positions in the bureau, and giving special treatment to wealthy inmates.

At last, the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC) has been awakened from its slumber.

***

On the issue of unexplained wealth, Macala was reported to have deposited in his bank account P5 million only three months after he was appointed prisons director.

The amount, sources said, allegedly came from rigged biddings, bribes from wealthy inmates for certain privileges like being allowed to own a cellular phone and earnings from the smuggling of liquor, drugs and guns.

To prove to me that they were telling the truth, they gave me the account number of Macala and his wife, Zenaida, at the Bank of the Philippine Islands, Lipa City (Highway) branch: 0883016327.

***

A mischievous subordinate, Prisons Supt. Alfredo "Boy" Gozon, whom Macala had suspended, reportedly deposited P300 in the above-mentioned account on two occasions.

Gozon said that his spies within Macala's inner circle told him their boss expressed surprise at the small deposits.

"*Sino kayang loko na nagdedeposito ng kapiranggot na pera?*" Macala allegedly told his close subordinates.

***

By the way, convicted rapist Romeo Jalosjos has filed a libel case against this writer on my write-up that he shot a fellow inmate in the leg inside the National Penitentiary's maximum security compound recently.

Jalosjos, deposed congressman of Zamboanga del Norte, has hired the services of prominent lawyer Jesus Santos, who happens to be my friend.

Anak ka ng tatay mo, Jess, bakit mo tinanggap? I thought you only lawyered for the oppressed.

Oh, well, money talks!

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Acoustic Night Out at Onstage featuring Side A
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Blu faces John-O

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Crisano positive for shabu /METRO A23

Lakers in command /A28

Trackfest stakes 15 golds /A27

Quirimit tops lap; Ramos keeps lead /A26

Senate probes PBA drug mess

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PBA said it was just part of a continuing probe of fake Fil-foreign players.

But the Senate announced yesterday it will conduct an inquiry to determine the extent of the drug problem in the Philippine Basketball Association.

The Senate stand came simultaneously with a PBA announcement yesterday that it will launch a crackdown on drug abusers in its ranks.

The Senate committee on youth and sports led by Sen. Robert Barbers has called for a probe to shed light on the drug mess following the ban slapped on Batang Red Bull star Jimwell Torion who tested positive for shabu.

Barbers, noting the extent of the PBA's influence on the youth, said they are initiating the probe on May 5.

PBA officials however claimed the Senate hearing "will just be a resumption of the committee's investigation of the fake Filipino-foreign players."

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala, while reiterating that the league won't treat its drug issue like a criminal case, stressed that he would stop at nothing to make the 29-year-old league drug-free.

Torion was the latest player caught using banned substance, an offense that earned him an indefinite suspension from the league–the harshest punishment the PBA has imposed on a player.

Found to have used shabu, Torion will be denied his P250,000 monthly income until he is exonerated by the league which will re-evaluate his case after the Asian Invitational in August.

"It doesn't mean however that, after we reviewed his case, his ban would already be lifted," Eala told the INQUIRER.

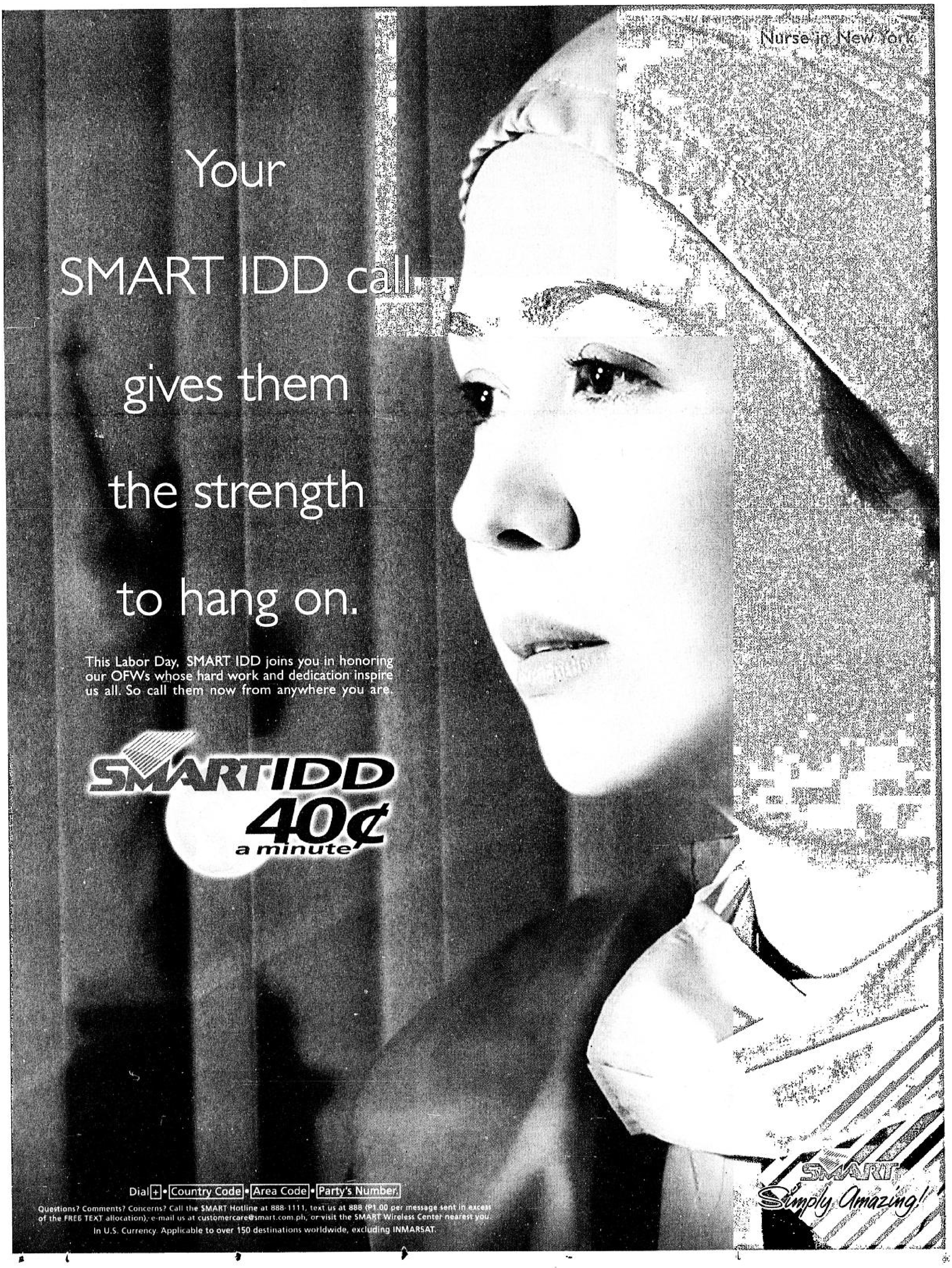
Just the same, Eala said the league will consider Torion's honesty after he readily admitted his wrongdoing.

Torion, who will most likely be summoned by the Barbers commitee, has also volunteered to help Eala educate the public about the dangers of using drugs.

Last March, Talk N Text's Asi Taulava and Dorian Peña tested positive for marijuana and were meted a two-game suspension each.

Talks spread yesterday that Alex Crisano of the Barangay Ginebra squad was also found positive for shabu. *(See related story on Metro)*

Eala said the PBA will come out with a detailed anti-drug policy to be based on that of the National Basketball Association.



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DR. JOSE RAUL CANLAS, Doctor of Sports Medicine and Orthopedic Surgery, Section Chief for Sports Medicine in St. Luke's Medical Center. He was head of the medical team for the last Olympic and Asian games, and is Team Physician for Philippine delegations and other sports teams.

VIVIAN ZAPANTA, certified fitness instructor of Asian Development Bank and San Miguel Corporation, as well as personal trainer of prominent personalities. She has lectured on fitness and health to organizations, private corporations and universities.

CORY QUIRINO, TV host of the longest-running lifestyle magazine show in the Philippines, wellness columnist, and author. She has also given lectures on total wellness.

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Quirimit tops lap; Ramos keeps lead

By June Navarro

TAGAYTAY CITY(via PLDT)—Arnel Quirimit returned to the winner's circle in spectacular fashion yesterday but Merculio Ramos held on to the yellow jersey of leadership after five laps of the Tour Pilipinas 2003 bikathon here.

Quirimit, team captain of the Tanduay Distillers, sustained a solo breakaway in the downhill run to the finish and became the second double stage winner after Warren Davadilla by topping the 174-kilometer stage in four hours, 13 minutes and 19 seconds.

Quirimit's teammate Ericson Obosa finished second for the day over Lito Atilano and Frederick Feliciano, who checked in 34.41 seconds behind the lap winner.

But the 27-year-old Quirimit, the winner of the kick-off stage in Legaspi City, could only advance to fourth place from sixth, still four minutes and 17 seconds away from Ramos, who coasted home in the company of the other top 10 riders in the day's 14-man fourth group .

"Everybody's watching me so I just maintained my pace and defended the lead," said Ramos in Tagalog.

The overall leader, who put up a mini grocery from his P100,000 earnings in the 1998 Tour, kept his one-minute, 39-second advantage over Placido Valdez while Davadilla, who posted back-to-back lap wins on Monday and Tuesday, remained third, 3:31.31 behind.

Lloyd Reynante of Pagcor Sports slipped from fourth to sixth, the Postmen's Enrique Domingo improved from ninth to seventh while Pagcor skipper Rhyan Taguilig fell to eighth place overall.

Eusebio Quiñones of Patrol 117 and Intel's Alagano Fernando brought up the rear of the magic 10 of this Tour presented by Air21 and sponsored by Accel, BPI-MS, Longines, Look-Vittoria, Selle Italia, Philtranco and San Miguel Light.

Two-time Tour champion Renato Dolosa improved from 13th to 12th, 10 minutes and 58 seconds behind Ramos.

The 1-2 Quirimit-Obosa finish lifted Tanduay from seventh to second, just 4:14.17 behind Intel, in the race for the P1 million top team prize. Eco Savers held on to third, 7:52.58 behind.

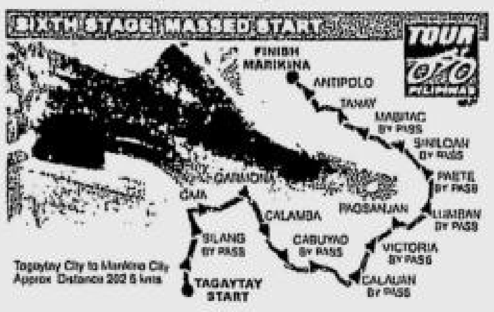
Albert Primero and Ronald Gorrantes alternately paced a 19-man lead pack in the climb to Batulao with 25 km left but faded in the downhill drive to Tagaytay City.

The two managed to finish together as the third group, 42.61 seconds behind

Quirimit, who stepped up his pace in the last seven kilometers soloed it home.

"It was just pure luck aside from the fact that I'm in good shape. For now, I will just leave the overall lead to the other cyclists and maintain my place in the standings," said Quirimit.

The 83 cyclists proceed to Marikina today on a 202-km lap via Antipolo.



Overall Standings

RANK	RIDER		TEAM	TIME
1	MERCULIO	RAMOS	SAM	18h19'51.891
2	PLACIDO	VALDEZ	DRU	00h01'39.111
3	WARREN	DAVADILLA	INT	00h03'31.319
4	ARNEL	QUIRIMIT	TAN	00h04'17.629
5	BERNARD	LUZON	PAT	00h06'13.870
6	LLOYD	REYNANTE	PAG	00h06'41.710
7	ENRIQUE	DOMINGO	POS	00h07'33.621
8	RHYAN	TANGUILIG	PAG	00h07'51.750
9	EUSEBIO	QUIÑONES	PAT	00h08'43.850
10	FERNANDO	ALAGANO	INT	00h09'00.340
11	RONALD	GORRANTES	ECO	00h10'51.649
12	RENATO	DOLOSA	GIL	00h10'58.570
13	FREDERICK	FELICIANO	DRU	00h12'23.022
14	SANTI	BARNACHEA	BOW	00h13'01.820
15	CARLO	JAZUL	ECO	00h13'05.381
16	ARNOLD	MARCELO	POS	00h14'59.673
17	JOSEPH	MILLANES	TAN	00h15'21.272
18	LITO	ATILANO	GIL	00h16'19.899
19	ERICSON	OBOSA	TAN	00h19'26.891
20	PATERNO	CURTAN	ECO	00h20'37.240
21	ALFIE	CATALAN	BOW	00h22'39.311
22	DANNY	GANIGAN	SAM	00h24'13.225
23	ALBERT	PRIMERO	PLD	
24	FELIX	CELESTE	VAT	00h24'53.893
25	MANUEL	MENDOZA	SAM	00h25'37.234

5TH LAP STANDINGS

1	ARNEL	QUIRIMIT	TAN	04h13'19.050
2	ERICSON	OBOSA	TAN	00h00'34.41
3	LITO	ATILANO	GIL	same
4	FREDERICK	FELICIANO	DRU	same
5	ALBERT	PRIMERO	PLD	00h00'42.61
6	RONALD	GORRANTES	ECO	same
7	BERNARD	LUZON	PAT	00h00'46.21
8	WARREN	DAVADILLA	INT	same
9	MERCULIO	RAMOS	SAM	same
10	FERNANDO	ALAGANO	INT	same
11	ALFIE	CATALAN	BOW	same
12	JOSEPH	MILLANES	TAN	same
13	RENATO	DOLOSA	GIL	same
14	SANTI	BARNACHEA	BOW	same
15	FELIX	CELESTE	VAT	same
16	ENRIQUE	DOMINGO	POS	same
17	PLACIDO	VALDEZ	DRU	same
18	DANNY	GANIGAN	SAM	same
19	CARLO	JAZUL	ECO	same
20	ARNOLD	MARCELO	POS	same
21	MANUEL	MENDOZA	SAM	00h02'06.32
22	LLOYD	REYNANTE	PAG	00h02'21.03
23	RHYAN	TANGUILIG	PAG	00h03'31.07
24	EUSEBIO	QUIÑONES	PAT	same
25	PATERNO	CURTAN	ECO	same

TEAM STANDINGS

PL	TEAM	TIMED	DEFICIT
1	INTEL	74h23'17.96	
2	TANDUAY RHUM RIDERS	74h27'32.13	00h04'14.17
3	ECO SAVERS	74h31'10.54	00h07'52.58
4	PATROL 117	74h35'42.99	00h12'25.02
5	PAGCORSPORTS	74h36'38.30	00h13'20.33
6	SAMSUNG	74h39'20.05	00h16'02.08
7	POSTMEN	74h45'26.93	00h22'08.96
8	VAT RIDERS	74h57'42.62	00h34'24.65
9	BOWLING GOLD	75h01'48.11	00h38'30.14
10	DRUG BUSTERS	75h14'38.20	00h51'20.24
11	GILBEYS ISLAND PUNCH	75h28'40.70	01h05'22.73
12	PLDT-NDD	76h20'23.44	01h57'05.47

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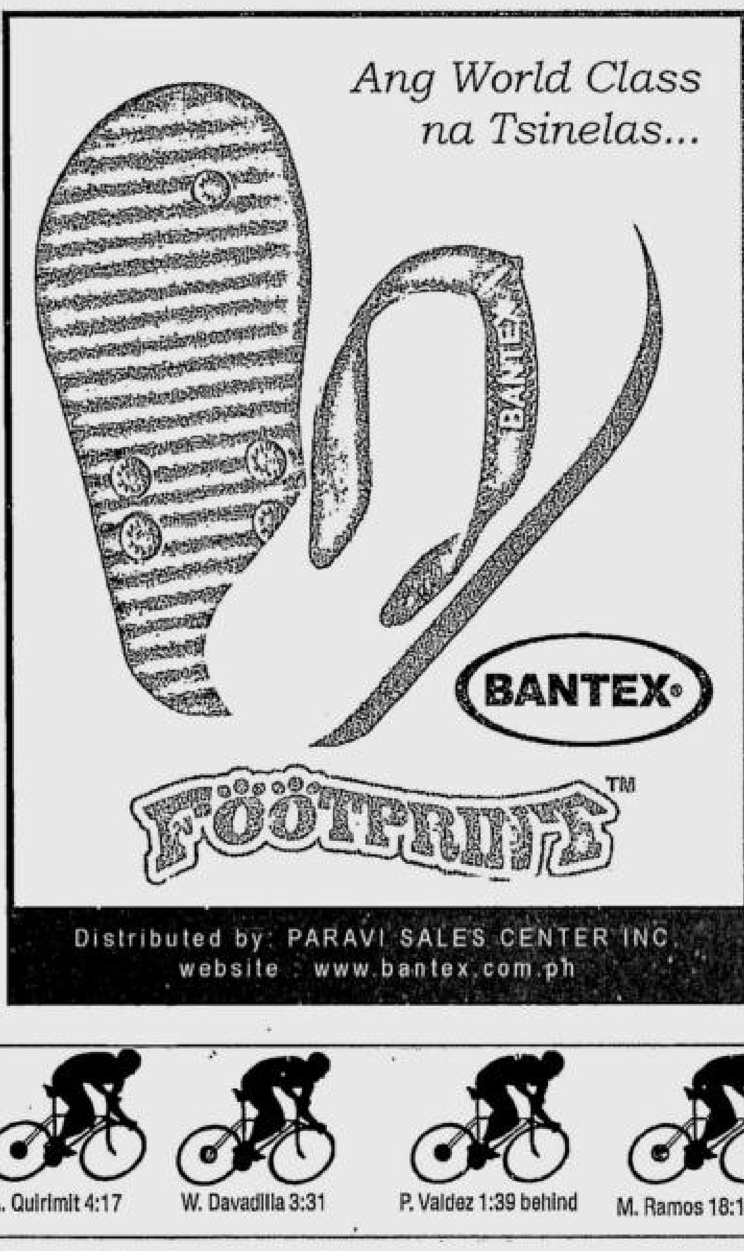

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SPORTSTV

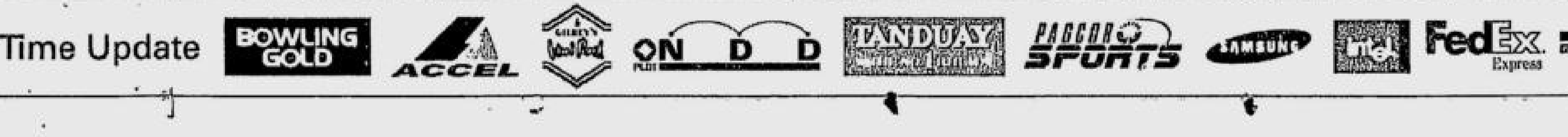
Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: Magic vs Pistons 8 a.m. (r-7 p.m.) IBC 13-Orlando attempts to become only the third eighth seed (Denver-1994, New York-1999) to eliminate a top ranked squad when it takes on the Pistons in Detroit.

Mavericks vs Blazers 8:30 a.m. (r-9:30 p.m.) Solar Sports-Portland averted a sweep Monday, but the odds still favor Dallas to win the series as it hosts Game 5.

GOLF: LPGA Office Depot 8 a.m. (r) ESPN-Annika Sorenstam snatches her first LPGA victory of the season, a tune-up for her historic appearance in the PGA Tour in this month's The Colonial.

Shell Houston Open Highlights 5 p.m. Star Sports-Take a look back at how Fred Couples finally ended his five - year drought in the PGA with his triumph in Texas



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Trackfest stakes 15 golds

By Marc Anthony Reyes

EDUARDO Buenavista, who broke the Philippine record in his first crack at the 10,000 meters during the Busan Asian Games last year, is the runaway favorite to rule the event when the Milo national open track and field championships unveils today with 15 gold medals at stake at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

A field of 2,000 including athletes from Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia are seeing action in the four-day meet that will will help decide the composition of the Philippine team to the Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam this December.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain will be the keynote speaker during the brief 9 a.m. opening ceremony of the event which is part of the worldwide celebration of the 2003 World Athletics Day on May 11.

The other golds at stake are men's and women's 10-K walk, girls' long jump and shot put, boys' javelin and pole vault, girls' high jump, men's and women's discus, steeplechase, women's 3,000 meters and the 10,000 meters for boys', girls' and women's.

One night of indiscretion

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

ONE mistake you die. That's the law in the olden times, the creed the legendary gunslinger Django of the silver screen lived by.

It still applies today. It will also tomorrow, and the many more tomorrows of our lives.

And so if it's true that Jimwell Torion, the Batang Red Bull no more, had taken an illegal drug just once, then he made the one mistake that cost him–in a manner of speaking–his life.

He has lost his "life" because his life, before he was found positive for shabu use, was a life of wealth, comfort and happiness.

At 28, Jimwell had a life made out of a Hollywood script: P250,000 a month salary as a Batang Red Bull first stringer, a beautiful dream house in Antipolo and a family brimming with pride for all the world to see. And to think that Jimwell is a mere fisherman's son, whose one and only tool that got him out of a possible fisherman's life is basketball. From his native Argao, Cebu, Jimwell, only 5-foot-7, shot himself to PBA fame and onto a land of fulfilled dreams through his spitfire moves as an inherent basketball talent.

Ah, just one night of indiscretion. How long ago has this scourge started plaguing mankind? As humans born of imperfections, if not prone to imperfections, do we not have the luxury of committing one indiscretion and getting away with it? Are we forever tied to Adam's indiscretion in the Garden of Eden? Who was Jimwell's Eve the night it happened in Cebu City?

Ah, the bubble had burst too early for Jimwell. He was ahead by 100 points with a quarter left–only to blow it with one indiscretion. He committed more than an offensive foul, more than a glaring foul, more than a dangerous foul that Batang Red Bull management dropped him like a hot potato for the rest of the year. Lost was P2.2 million in salaries for Jimwell.

My heart can only bleed for Jimwell.

With his quarter of a million bucks a month gone, where will Jimwell get his monthly amortization of P82,000 for that dream house in Antipolo where live his wife, who had been his childhood sweetheart, and four children?

I guess, Red Bull had kind of acted too harsh. Stripping Jimwell of his salary was more than an act of condemnation. The least Red Bull could have done was help Jimwell out of the rut. I mean, Jimwell's salary can be withheld, why not. But how about that amortization of P82,000 that Jimwell has to face each month? Red Bull, for all the good deeds Jimwell had done to the team, should have exhibited the virtue of humane treatment in these trying times for a guy gone astray.

Look, Jimwell admitted his mistake openly. He was remorseful and publicly apologized for his one night of indiscretion.

Red Bull can reciprocate Jimwell's loyalty and humility by helping the beleaguered guard restructure his debts. Maybe, giving Jimwell a loan so he can settle his house debts while he is out of job would be a big lift to the guy's spirits, now sagging as days go by, I believe.

To a multinational like Red Bull, a little something for its once fiery soldier won't hurt. Just a drop in the bucket.

But I have a question to our drug experts. Do you honestly believe Jimwell is a one-time shabu-user? That what he did amounted to "one night of indiscretion"? I mean, can tests prove that a person found positive for drug use did it just once? Can further tests prove that one is a habitual user of a banned drug?

I pose the questions in the wake of reports that Jimwell would be subjected to rehabilitation.

You know what rehabilitation is?

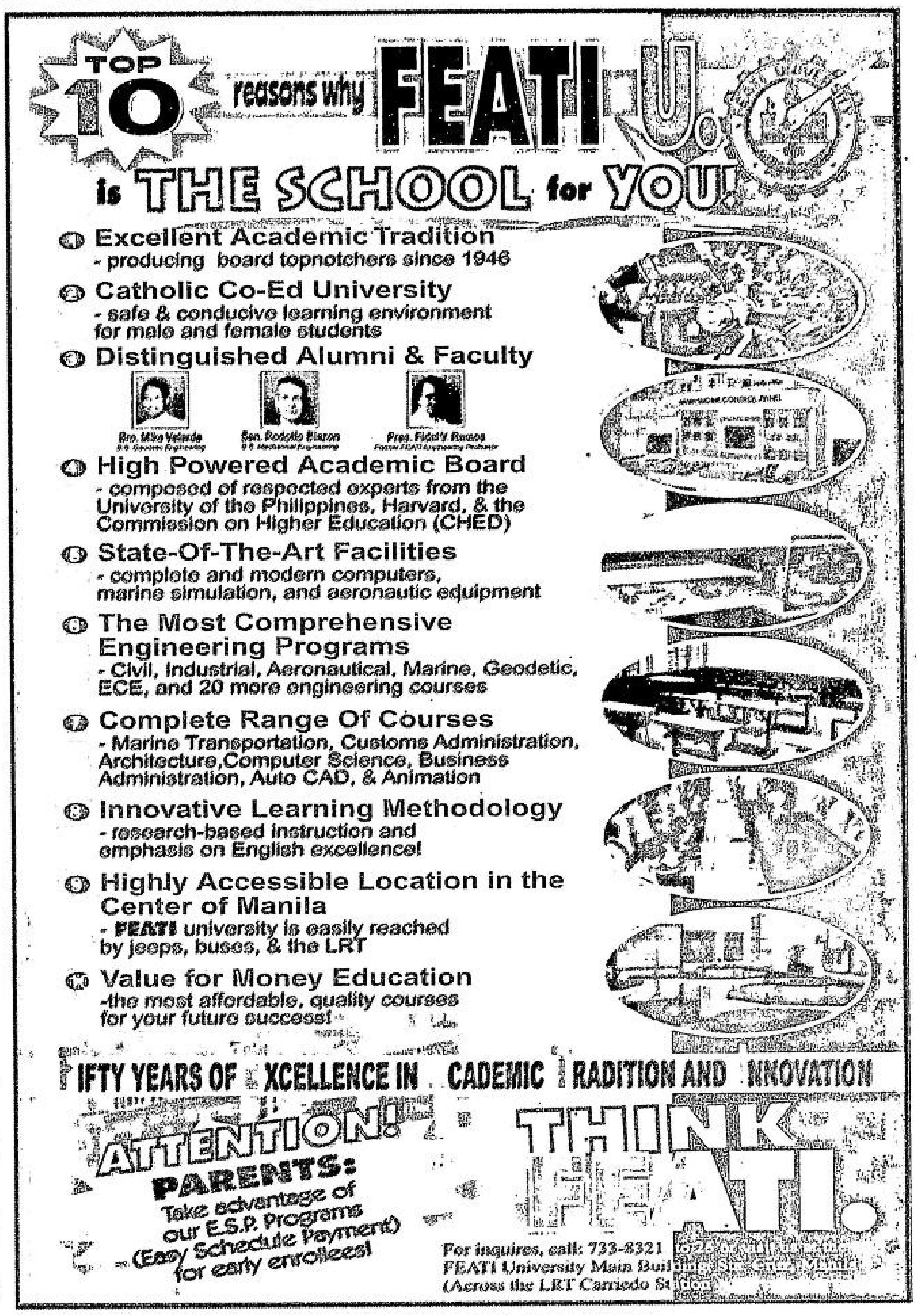
In layman's language, it is putting someone in a place where he is to undergo treatment for his drug problem–if he is a habitual drug user at all.

Can "one night of indiscretion" be considered a drug abuse problem on the part of Jimwell?

I guess Commissioner Eala should zero in on this before ordering a rehabilitation for Jimwell. Maybe, banning Jimwell indefinitely would be unjustified at this time.

Meanwhile, while this is being worked out, may I further suggest that Red Bull make Jimwell a full-time practice player for the team if only to augment Jimwell's income at a time when the guy is mired in the pits.

Everybody in this world ought to be given a second chance, the way Mary Magdalene has had hers in the biblical times.



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AT A GLANCE

NBA PLAYOFFS 2003

EASTERN CONFERENCE

(1) Detroit vs. (8) Orlando
Magic 3, Pistons 1
Game 1: Orlando 99, Detroit 94
Game 2: Detroit 89, Orlando 77
Game 3: Orlando 89, Detroit 80
Game 4 : Orlando 100, Detroit 93
Game 5 at Detroit (May 1)

(2) New Jersey vs (7) Milwaukee
Nets 3, Bucks 2
Game 1: New Jersey 109, Milwaukee 96
Game 2: Milwaukee 88, New Jersey 85
Game 3: New Jersey 103, Milwaukee 101
Game 4 Milwaukee 119, New Jersey 114
Game 5: New Jersey 89, Milwaukee 82
Game 6 at Milwaukee (May 2)

(3) Indiana vs (6) Boston
Pacers 2, Celtics 3
Game 1: Boston 103, Indiana 100
Game 2: Indiana 89, Boston 77
Game 3: Boston 101, Indiana 83
Game 4: Boston 102, Indiana 92
Game 5: Indiana 93 Boston 88
Game 6 at Boston (May 2)

(4) Philadelphia vs (5) N. Orleans
Sixers 3, Hornets 1,
Game 1: Philadelphia 98, New Orleans 90
Game 2: Philadelphia 90, New Orleans 85
Game 3: New Orleans 99, Philadelphia 85
Game 4: Philadelphia 96, New Orleans 87
Game 5 at Philadelphia (May 1)

WESTERN CONFERENCE

(1) San Antonio vs (8) Phoenix
Spurs 3, Suns 2
Game 1 Phoenix 96, San Antonio 95 (OT)
Game 2: San Antonio 84, Phoenix 76
Game 3: San Antonio 99, Phoenix 86
Game 4: Phoenix 86, San Antonio 84
Game 5: San Antonio 94, Phoenix 82
Game 6 at Phoenix (May 2)

(2) Sacramento vs (7) Utah
Kings 3, Jazz 1
Game 1: Sacramento 96, Utah 90
Game 2: Sacramento 108, Utah 95
Game 3 Utah 107, Sacramento 104
Game 4: Sacramento 99, Utah 82
Game 5 at Sacramento (May 1)

(3) Dallas vs (6) Portland
Mavs 3, Blazers 1
Game 1: Dallas 96, Portland 86
Game 2: Dallas 103, Portland 99
Game 3: Dallas 115, Portland 103
Game 4: Portland 98, Dallas 79
Game 5 at Dallas (May 1)

(4) Minnesota vs. (5) LA Lakers
Wolves 2, Lakers 3
Game 1: LA Lakers 117, Minnesota 98
Game 2: Minnesota 119, LA Lakers 91
Game 3: Minnesota 114, LA Lakers 110
Game 4: LA Lakers 102, Minnesota 97
Game 5: LA Lakers 120, Minnesota 90
Game 6 at LA Lakers (May 2)

Lakers take command

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota— Kobe Bryant, Shaquille O'Neal and the rest of the Los Angeles Lakers showed the Minnesota Timberwolves what it takes to win a big playoff game.

Bryant scored 32 points, O'Neal added 27 and the Lakers got great support in a 120-90 rout of the Timberwolves on Tuesday that gave them a 3-2 lead in their best-of-seven National Basketball Association first-round playoff series.

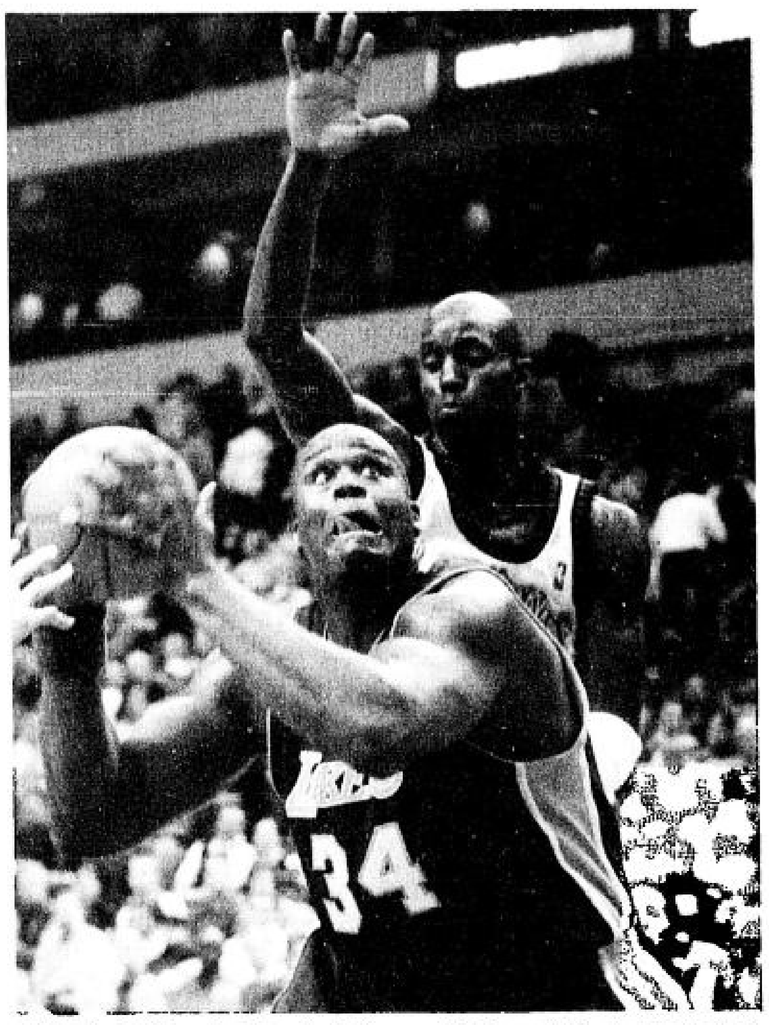
As the Lakers moved within sight of the second round, Indiana kept their season going as they rallied for a 93-88 overtime victory over Boston, who missed out on a chance to advance.

In Tuesday's other games, San Antonio in the West and New Jersey in the East moved within one victory of advancing, New Jersey posting an 89-82 victory over Milwaukee and San Antonio downing Phoenix 94-82.

BOBBY Jackson of the Sacramento Kings was named the NBA's Sixth Man of the Year award winner on Tuesday.

The three-time defending champion Lakers, seeded fifth in the Western Conference, had appeared to be in trouble after losing Game 3 at home in overtime to fall behind in the series against the Timberwolves. But they evened things with a win in game four on Sunday and showed their huge advantage in experience Tuesday.

As usual they relied heavily on Bryant, who scored 16 points in the third quarter, and O'Neal, who made 10-of-18 shots and pulled down 11 rebounds.



O'NEAL (34) shoots in front of Minnesota's Garnett during Game 5 of their NBA playoffs. Los Angeles won, 120-90. REUTERS

Bryant, Iverson to US 5

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado—Representing his country should be a better experience for Jermaine O'Neal this time, especially with Allen Iverson and Kobe Bryant as teammates.

USA Basketball on Tuesday announced that National Basketball Association All-Stars Allen Iverson, Kobe Bryant and O'Neal have been added to the Olympic team.

The "other" O'Neal in a league with Lakers' star Shaquille O'Neal, Jermaine was a member of the US team embarrassed with a sixth-place finish in the World Basketball Championships last year. *AFP*

Superal superior

By Jong Arcano

WOLEN Juan Superal capped one of the best performances ever by a junior player with a two-under-par 70 yesterday that kept his winning rampage in the Samsung Jungolf Tour.

The 10-year-old Superal was simply super from the special tees set up for kids of his age at the Player course of the Orchard all week as he became the first jungolfer to break par in all three rounds of a tournament in recent years.

The numbers were nothing less than spectacular, his first two rounds of seven-under 65 and an even hotter 64 the next day already in the record books as the lowest in the circuit. His 199 aggregate for 54-holes is also believed to be another tournament record.

Superal, now 5-for-5 in the summer, won by 43 strokes over Melvin Pizarro. It was also the fifth consecutive time the son of touring pro Wendy posted a double-digit victory.

Wolen's sister Crystal Faith won pulling away over Paulina Sotto, daughter of comedian-television host Vic.

Postponed

THE BASKETBALL Association of the Philippines yesterday announced the postponement of the Southeast Asian Basketball Association men's championship due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome gripping the region. Originally slated to start May 5, the tournament will be moved to a later date.

RACING TIPS

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BY MR. 999

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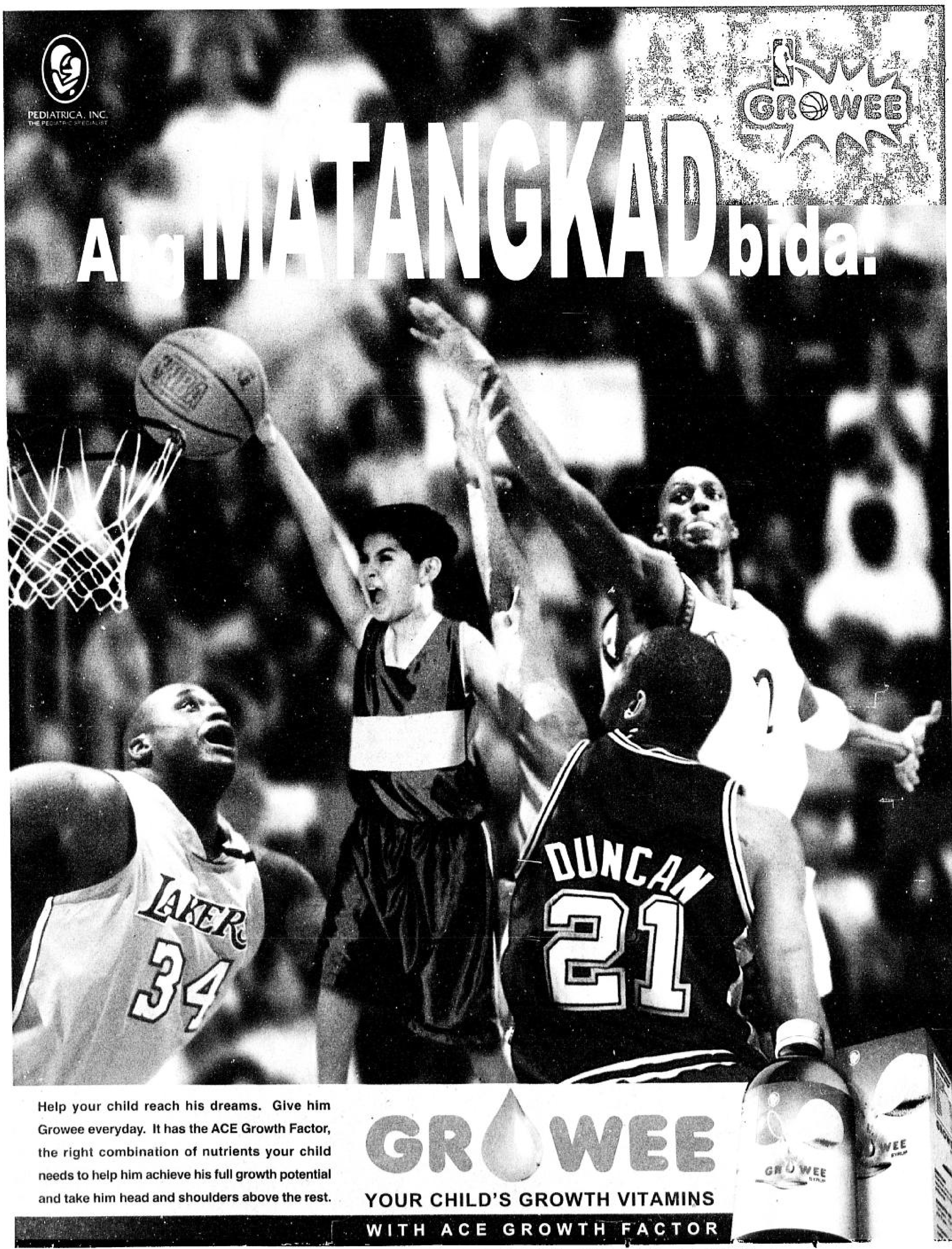
Race 2--1. Puppy Dog Tail 2. Crystal City 3. Summit Power 4. Loose Cannon
Race 3--1. Gossip Column 2. Like A Prince
Race 4--1. Maging Matalino 2. Sharp Drive 3. Thundering Dunk
Race 5--1. D'Engineer 2. Simple Doding 3. Divine Right
Race 6--1. Silky Sullivan 2. Desert Deb 3. Real McCoy
Race 7--1. Boss Lino 2. Time Specialist 3. Nine Wesy
Race 8--1. D'Optician/Hezabellagio 2. That's My Tiger 3. Well Noted 4. Flying Strike
Race 9--1. Sekreta 2. Free Entrance 3. Flying Machine 4. Fountain of Gold 5. Strawberry Hope



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Game 4: Phoenix 86, San Antonio 84
Game 5: San Antonio 94, Phoenix 82
Game 6 at Phoenix (May 2)

(2) Sacramento vs (7) Utah
Kings 3, Jazz 1
Game 1: Sacramento 96, Utah 90
Game 2: Sacramento 108, Utah 95
Game 3 Utah 107, Sacramento 104
Game 4: Sacramento 99, Utah 82
Game 5 at Sacramento (May 1)

(3) Dallas vs (6) Portland
Mavs 3, Blazers 1
Game 1: Dallas 96, Portland 86
Game 2: Dallas 103, Portland 99
Game 3: Dallas 115, Portland 103
Game 4: Portland 98, Dallas 79
Game 5 at Dallas (May 1)

(4) Minnesota vs. (5) LA Lakers
Wolves 2, Lakers 3
Game 1: LA Lakers 117, Minnesota 98
Game 2: Minnesota 119, LA Lakers 91
Game 3: Minnesota 114, LA Lakers 110
Game 4: LA Lakers 102, Minnesota 97
Game 5: LA Lakers 120,Minnesota 90
Game 6 at LA Lakers (May 2)

Lakers take command

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota— Kobe Bryant, Shaquille O'Neal and the rest of the Los Angeles Lakers showed the Minnesota Timberwolves what it takes to win a big playoff game.

Bryant scored 32 points, O'Neal added 27 and the Lakers got great support in a 120-90 rout of the Timberwolves on Tuesday that gave them a 3-2 lead in their best-of-seven National Basketball Association first-round playoff series.

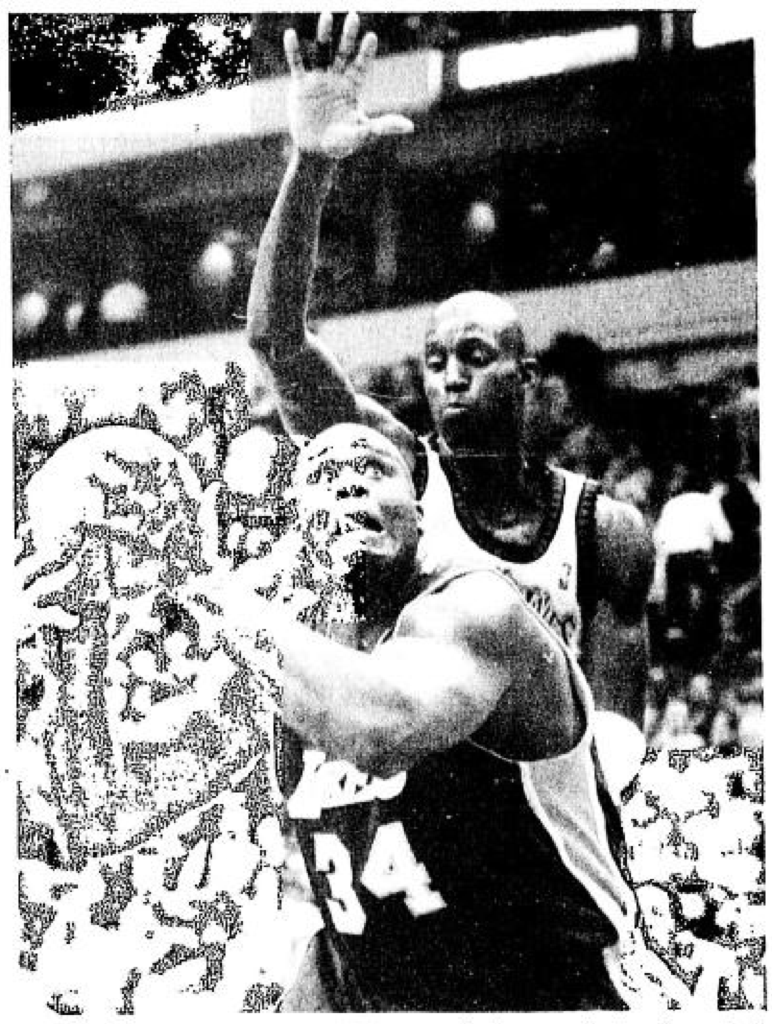
As the Lakers moved within sight of the second round, Indiana kept their season going as they rallied for a 93-88 overtime victory over Boston, who missed out on a chance to advance.

In Tuesday's other games, San Antonio in the West and New Jersey in the East moved within one victory of advancing, New Jersey posting an 89-82 victory over Milwaukee and San Antonio downing Phoenix 94-82.

BOBBY Jackson of the Sacramento Kings was named the NBA's Sixth Man of the Year award winner on Tuesday.

The three-time defending champion Lakers, seeded fifth in the Western Conference, had appeared to be in trouble after losing Game 3 at home in overtime to fall behind in the series against the Timberwolves. But they evened things with a win in game four on Sunday and showed their huge advantage in experience Tuesday.

As usual they relied heavily on Bryant, who scored 16 points in the third quarter, and O'Neal, who made 10-of-18 shots and pulled down 11 rebounds.



O'NEAL (34) shoots in front of Minnesota's Garnett during Game 5 of their NBA playoffs. Los Angeles won, 120-90. REUTERS

Bryant, Iverson to US 5

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado—Representing his country should be a better experience for Jermaine O'Neal this time, especially with Allen Iverson and Kobe Bryant as teammates.

USA Basketball on Tuesday announced that National Basketball Association All-Stars Allen Iverson, Kobe Bryant and O'Neal have been added to the Olympic team.

The "other" O'Neal in a league with Lakers' star Shaquille O'Neal, Jermaine was a member of the US team embarrassed with a sixth-place finish in the World Basketball Championships last year. *AFP*

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Superal superior

By Jong Arcano

WOLEN Juan Superal capped one of the best performances ever by a junior player with a two-under-par 70 yesterday that kept his winning rampage in the Samsung Jungolf Tour.

The 10-year-old Superal was simply super from the special tees set up for kids of his age at the Player course of the Orchard all week as he became the first jungolfer to break par in all three rounds of a tournament in recent years.

The numbers were nothing less than spectacular, his first two rounds of seven-under 65 and an even hotter 64 the next day already in the record books as the lowest in the circuit. His 199 aggregate for 54-holes is also believed to be another tournament record.

Superal, now 5-for-5 in the summer, won by 43 strokes over Melvin Pizarro. It was also the fifth consecutive time the son of touring pro Wendy posted a double-digit victory.

Wolen's sister Crystal Faith won pulling away over Paulina Sotto, daughter of comedian-television host Vic.

Postponed

THE BASKETBALL Association of the Philippines yesterday announced the postponement of the Southeast Asian Basketball Association men's championship due to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome gripping the region. Originally slated to start May 5, the tournament will be moved to a later date.

RACING TIPS

AT SAN LAZARO
BY MR. 999

Race 1--1. Golden Tale 2. Pabuya 3. Lady Victoria

Race 2--1. Puppy Dog Tall 2. Crystal City 3. Summit Power 4. Loose Cannon

Race 3--1. Gossip Column 2. Like A Prince

Race 4--1. Maging Matalino 2. Sharp Drive 3. Thundering Dunk

Race 5--1. D'Engineer 2. Simple Doding 3. Divine Right

Race 6--1. Silky Sullivan 2. Desert Deb 3. Real McCoy

Race 7--1. Boss Lino 2. Time Specialist 3. Nine Wesy

Race 8--1. D'Optician/Hezabellagio 2. That's My Tiger 3. Well Noted 4. Flying Strike

Race 9--1. Sekreta 2. Free Entrance 3. Flying Machine 4. Fountain of Gold 5. Strawberry Hope

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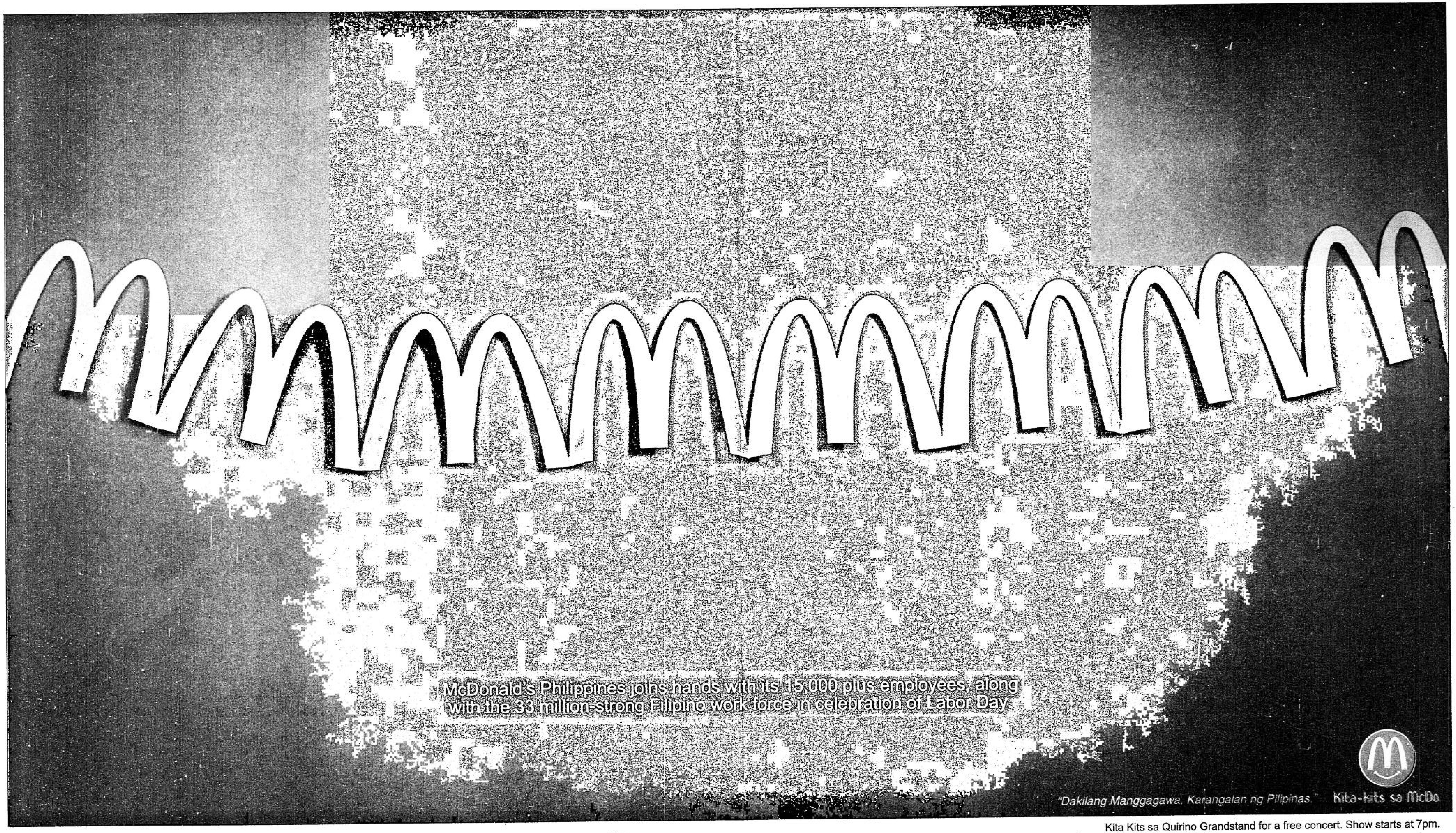

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Editor Louie C. Camino

ENTERTAINMENT

Goodbye, 'Miss Saigon'

By Leah Salterio

IT'S curtains down for "Miss Saigon," the Boublil-Schoenberg musical that placed Filipinos, especially Lea Salonga, in the international theater map.

After 14 years, "Miss Saigon" will have its very last performance on May 10, at the St. Augustine Parade in Bristol, England.

The musical which was produced by Cameron Mackintosh and which originated in London's Theater Royale on Drury Lane at the West End, with Lea Salonga as Kim, had a well-received United Kingdom tour which started in November 2001 in Manchester, after it ended its run in Manila, Singapore, Hong Kong and Sydney.

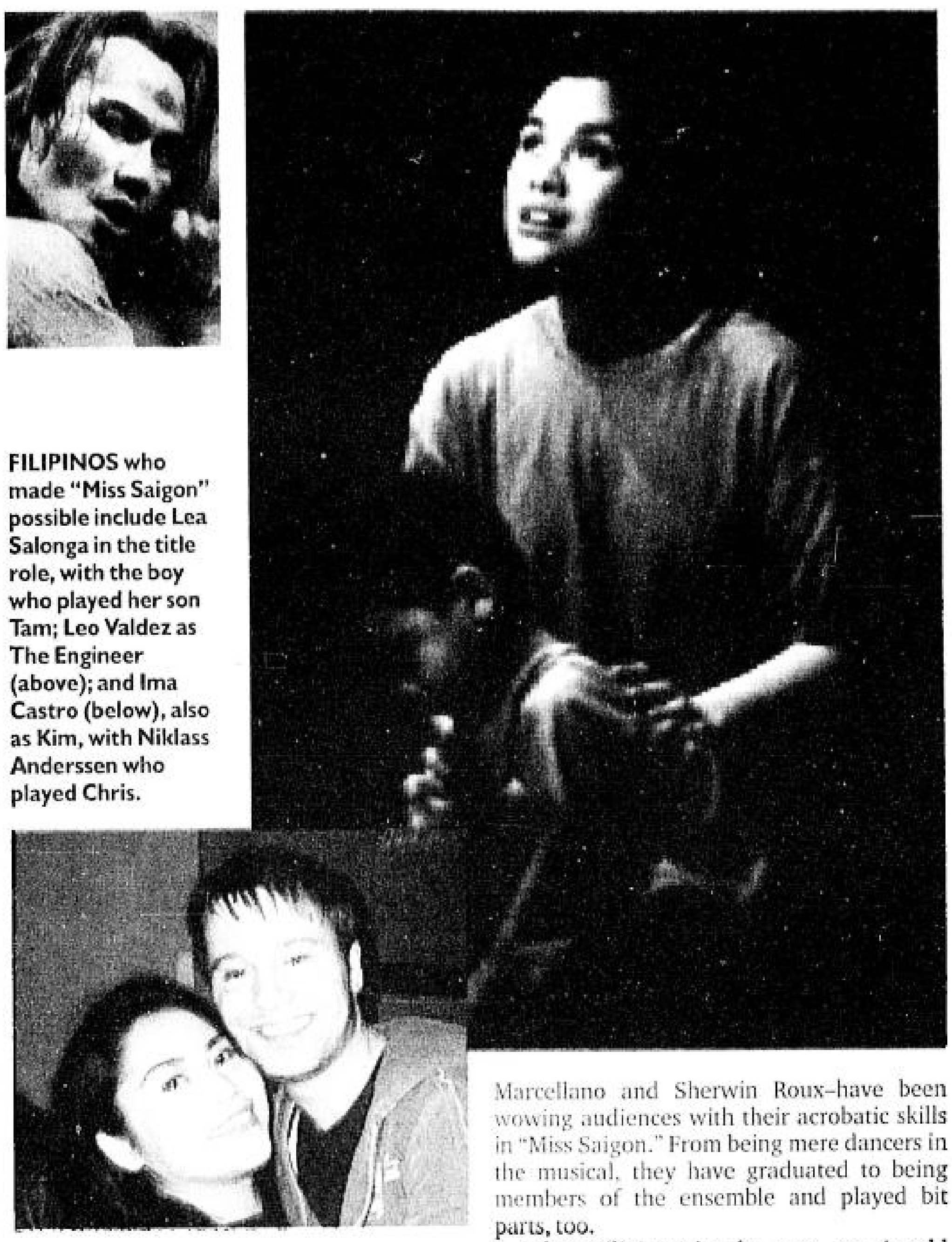
After Manchester, "Miss Saigon" went to Point Theater in Dublin, Ireland, followed by performances at the Edinburgh Playhouse in Scotland, which ended last January.

Last Feb. 4, "Miss Saigon" started at the Bristol Hippodrome.

Majority of the cast that performed in the Asian tour were also asked to join the UK shows. Leo Valdez continues to earn raves up to this day as The Engineer. Joanna Ampil, who earlier played Kim in London, also tackles the role in the current tour, with Ima Castro as alternate in certain performances.

Robert Vicencio plays Thuy and Junix Inocian alternates with Leo as The Engineer.

The Streetboys–Nichols Manalo, Meynard Marcellano and Sherwin Roux–have been wowing audiences with their acrobatic skills in "Miss Saigon." From being mere dancers in the musical, they have graduated to being members of the ensemble and played bit parts, too.



FILIPINOS who made "Miss Saigon" possible include Lea Salonga in the title role, with the boy who played her son Tam; Leo Valdez as The Engineer (above); and Ima Castro (below), also as Kim, with Niklass Anderssen who played Chris.

Other Filipinos in the cast are Arnold Trinidad, Chuck Marbella, Nathalie Everett, Robbie Guevarra, Tricia Canilao, Bicong del Rosario, Victor Bisa, Alex Fernandez, Theresa de Guzman, Angelo Paragoso, Ariel Reonal and Ravy Soc Alfonso. Some of them came from Australia and Germany.

Playing Chris, Kim's American G.I. lover, is Niklass Anderssen. Kingsley Leggs is Chris' best friend John, while Nicky Adams is Chris' wife Ellen.

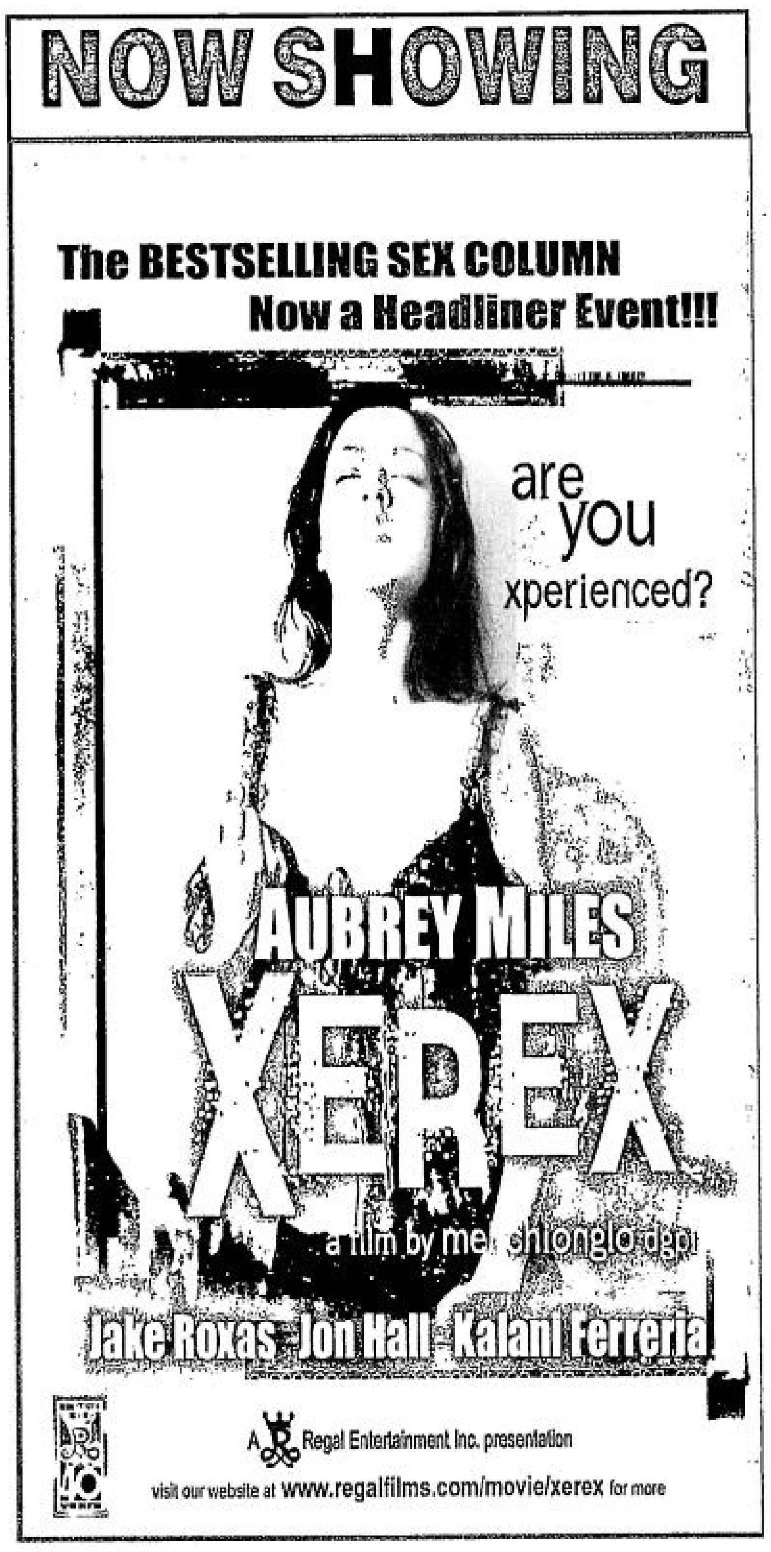
The UK tour is directed by Matthew Ryan with Darren Yap as associate director. Musical director is David Shrubsole, while musical supervisor is Daniel Bowling. Associate choreographer is Maggie Goodwin.

"Miss Saigon" was also staged in New York, Frankfurt and the Netherlands.

It is still not known, however, whether the major cast members will all return to the Philippines after the curtain goes down on "Miss Saigon."

DID YOU KNOW...

Broadcaster **Che-Che Lazaro** is apparently poor at taking directions. While in Glorietta 2 in Makati recently, Che-Che had to ask people nearly half a dozen times how to find Powerbooks. An eyewitness said Che-Che had come from National Bookstore where she made a few purchases. She then asked salesladies how to get to Powerbooks, and they gave her directions. When she got out of National, she asked the security guard again. She continued walking and, along the way, she again asked for directions from vendors who apparently were not of any help. Finally, a young woman offered to tell Che-Che how to find Powerbooks. The broadcaster was thankful and at last found Powerbooks.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X-MEN 2 P13 12:55,3:55, 6:55,9:55	ANGER MANAGEMENT R13 1:00,3:15,5:30, 7:45,10:00	X-MEN 2 P13 1:30,4:30, 7:30,10:30

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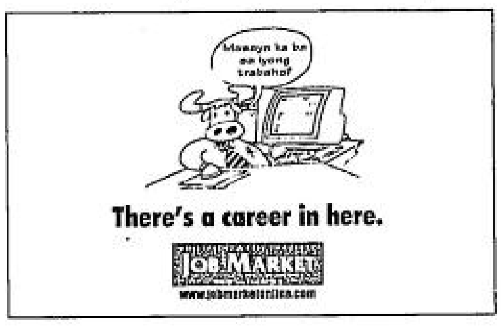
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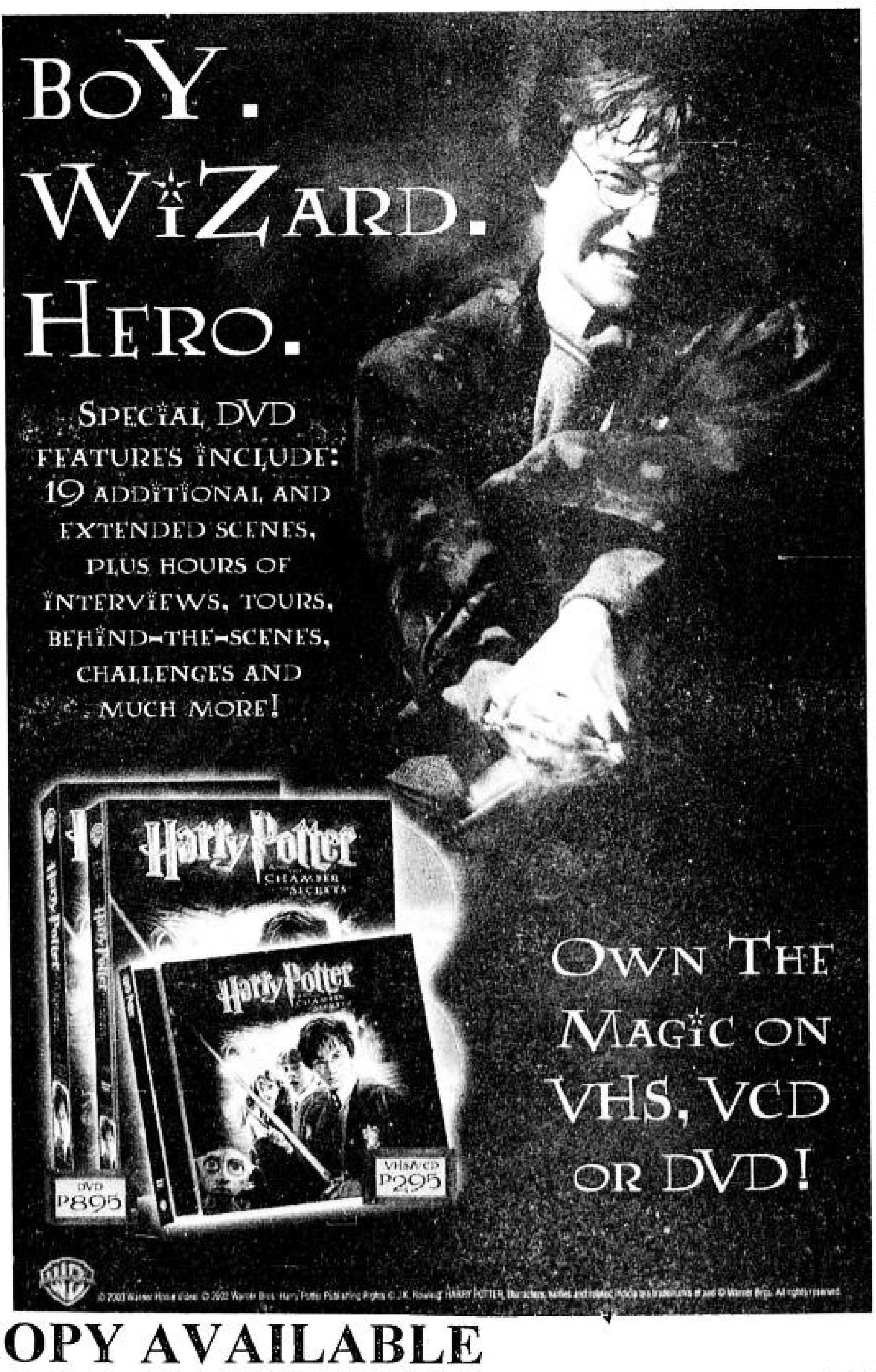
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Televiewers as victims of networks' 'fight to the finish'

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

QUITE a number of televiewers have confirmed our observation that local TV programs have been becoming sleazier by the month. Last year, we objected to the exploitation of sexy elements on noontime shows. Well, this season, even early-morning shows are dishing the dirt, guesting cheap boldies, dispensing smarmy blind items for the dumb, etc.

The wonder is that TV people feel they can behave this way with impunity. They have to be reminded that, when TV channels are granted licenses to operate by the government, they promise to provide wholesome programming and to uphold the right of minors not to be exposed to disturbing viewing fare.

Clearly, TV people haven't been fulfilling their pious promises, so why aren't government agencies rapping them for this? Their excesses, particularly on daytime TV, are plain for all to see on the TV screen. Viewers have been complaining by way of letters to newspapers and e-mails to our TV channels. So, why the lack of reaction and reform?

We hate to say it, but TV has never been as irresponsible as it is now. The much more vicious race for ratings has prompted producers to forget decent standards of programming, and viewers are the victims in this desperate "total war" scenario.

Viewers must speak up. Government agencies must act. Pity the young viewers who are exposed to salacious material throughout the day on TV. Even adult viewers feel used, abused and assaulted. Enough.

'Magnificat' in Bacood

GOOD news for residents of Manila: at 8 p.m. tomorrow, May 2, **Ryan Cayabyab**'s acclaimed religious musical, "Magnificat," will be performed at Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church on Libiran Street, Bacood, Sta. Mesa. Call **Evelyn** at 713-9295.

"Magnificat" has been performed all over the country, showcasing the singing and acting talents of some of the most outstanding musical-theater artists in the country.

The lead role of **Mary** has been essayed by four exceptional singers—**Pinky Marquez, Dulce, Jingle Buena** and **Rosanna Ordoñez**. In tomorrow's performance, Jingle plays Mary. **Jesus Christ** is portrayed by **Rito Asilo**.

There are more children in the musical now, in line with the production's intent to train new, young talents in musical-theater performance. The show's child actors now include 11-year-old **Daryl Deonzon**, eight-year-old **Janna Villaflor**, seven-year-old **Niña Arao**, and four-year-old **Ashia Asuncion**.

So 'baduy'

LAST Monday morning, we were having a mellow time at breakfast when **Winnie Cordero**, the traffic girl on Channel 2's "Magandang Umaga, Bayan" went on-camera. She was looking for a car that had a certain product's sticker, to award it a cash prize.

When she found a car that did sport the sticker, she congratulated its owner and asked for her first name. The lady cheerfully replied, "**Araceli**." Upon hearing that name, Cordero suddenly exclaimed, "*Ang baduy!*"

Excuse us? Since when has the name Araceli been "*baduy*"? Only in Ms. Cordero's mind.

Besides, why does this TV person feel she has the right to comment disparagingly on unsuspecting people's names?

Perhaps Ms. Cordero was just trying to be "funny"? In future, spare us from such ill-advised attempts at humor, please.

Celebrities on 'Fear Factor'

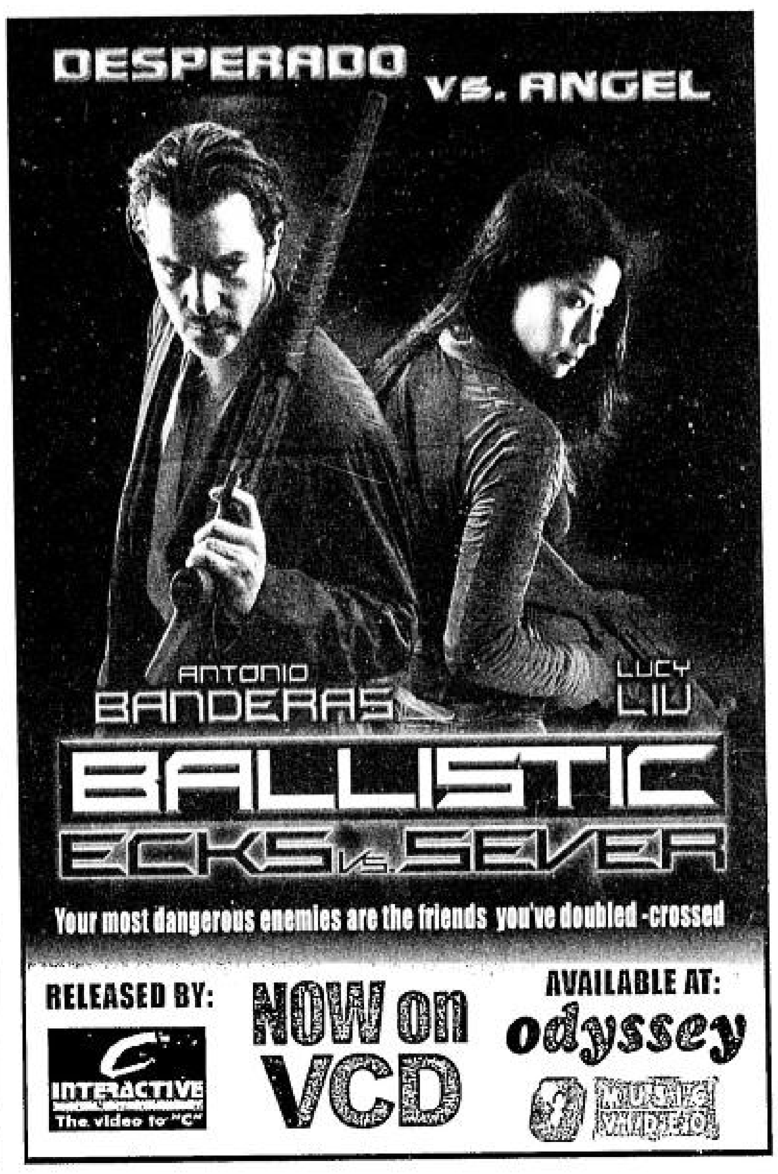
A SPECIAL celebrity episode of "Fear Factor" will be replayed today, May 1 on AXN's "Fear Factor." Catch **Kelly Preston, Coolio, Donny Osmond, Joanie Laurer, Brooke Burns** and **David Hasselhoff** as they confront their greatest fears and attempt to hurdle the show's daunting tests.

"Fear Factor" is hosted by **Josh Rogan**. Its celebrity contestants vie for big prizes that will go to their favorite charities.

'So Close'

CORY Yuen, master action director from Hong Kong, has come up with a new martial arts film, "So Close," with a novel premise: It tells the story of two beautiful sisters, played by **Shu Qi** and **Zhao Wei**, who turn out to be assassins for hire.

In the film, they are out to avenge the brutal killing of their father, who's been murdered by mobsters in search of his most valuable and powerful invention, the World Panorama Surveillance System. With their father's invention, the sisters can tap into any video security system in the world.



DID YOU KNOW...

Jackielou Blanco went shopping at the Alabang Town Center with her children **Kenneth, Rikki Mae** and **Arabella**. They appeared to be enjoying their bonding, but where was Jackielou's hubby **Ricky Davao**?

MELENDEZ

AQUINO

MARQUEZ

The sex lives of mayors and talk show hosts

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

KRIS Aquino clarified her earlier comment about having sex three times a day.

Said Kris: "**Korina (Sanchez)** and I were talking about a news item on couple's healthy sex lives (on their daily morning show on ABS-CBN, "Morning Girls"). Korina asked me what I think about it so I was speaking in general terms. If a married couple are happy with each other, then three times a day is fine. Why not?"

Kris has been fondly tagged as "*taklesa* queen" because she tends to say things that are better left unsaid. But it's her candidness and honesty that has endeared the talk show host to her followers. Maybe viewers should just learn to sift through her playful comments.

Even her on-and-off paramour, Parañaque Mayor **Joey Marquez**, was ribbed by his co-hosts on "S-Files" about Kristeta's intriguing statement. Joey played along and shot back, "I can't do it three times a day, just once a week but for 10 hours."

I wonder why he had to be teased by his co-hosts on the air about the issue. Did he want to tickle the public's imagination and hint that it's not really officially over between him and Kris? Or is he deliberately riding on the issue to edge out competition since "S-Files" is in a head-on collision with "The Buzz," which Kris co-hosts with **Boy Abunda**?

Kris had sworn to high heavens that she had called it quits with Joey because she did not want to commit the same mistake of falling hard for a married man. It is a different thing *to think* an affair is over, and *to feel* it is over. Anybody who has ever gone through the process of letting go knows that.

It seems like everything between Joey and Kris remains to be a guessing game. Make an educated guess, or a wild guess. Take your pick. Like choosing for yourself if you're going to do it three times daily or 10 hours once a week. They started a joke. That started the whole world talking.

Aiko in shape

GOT a surprise call from **Aiko Melendez**, who invited me to host one of her programs for her constituents in Quezon City. Of course I said yes.

I asked her how she lost so much weight. The blooming councilor/actress said, "All I eat is tuna, just cooked in different ways. And I go to the gym regularly."

Does her new look mean she's ready to fall in love again? If your body is in shape, then your heart must follow suit and be in its happiest state. She smiled. "I don't deny that I go out on dates, but there's nothing serious as of now. I just laugh off rumors linking me to Vice Herbert (Quezon City Vice Mayor **Herbert Bautista**) and other guys. *Lahat na lang yata nai-link nila sa akin. Baka pati si* **Manuel Quezon**, *i-link sa akin*!

"I've been married before and I've been hurt so I'm more careful now," she said. "But at the same time I'm more tolerant because being a single mom has taught me how to be more patient and understanding. If the guy talks sense and it will not bore me, I might give love a try again. But even if I don't have a love life, I know there's one guy who will never leave me and that's my son, **Andre**."

As a single mom myself, I've always believed that being a happier woman makes one a better mom. I certainly hope Aiko, who always gives her all, finds the happiness that love owes her.

Pops' new show

SINCE **Pops Fernandez**, one of my closest friends in the biz, and I don't get to see each other as often as we would want to due to our erratic schedules, our text exchange is the highlight of my day.

She promised to let me in on her new show on GMA 7 as soon as something concrete comes up. "It will be sometime June or July. We are still in the planning stage," the concert queen said in a text message. "I'm excited to be back on TV in my new home. Even the format is not definite yet. Suspense *muna*."

Just asking

WHO is **Pia Cabreira** in **Vic Sotto**'s life? Is the model just another passing fancy for the fancy-free comedian? Pia is said to be just a few years older than Vic's daughter **Danica**, and fashion insiders claim that Vic has showered the model with lavish gifts. That's no big deal really because Vic has always been known for being such a ladies' man. But take it from Vic's gorgeous ex-wife **Dina Bonnevie**: "If girls want to hook Vic, they should let him do the chasing."

What was **Richard Gomez** trying to insinuate when he told **Paolo Bediones** on "S-Files" that several shows have tried to topple Paolo's "Extra Extra" but they have all folded up and "E.E." is still going strong? It's common knowledge that Goma used to be with ABS-CBN 2, so his sarcastic remarks about GMA-7's rival shows is appalling. Did Goma say that just to liven up the discussion, or was it a sign of grudge towards his former home studio?

Personal

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TRIPLE 'X'
"X2: X-Men United" stars (from right) Hugh Jackman, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos and Alan Cumming attend the premiere of the follow-up to "X-Men," in Hollywood. The new movie, directed by Bryan Singer who also helmed the original, is now showing in Manila. AP

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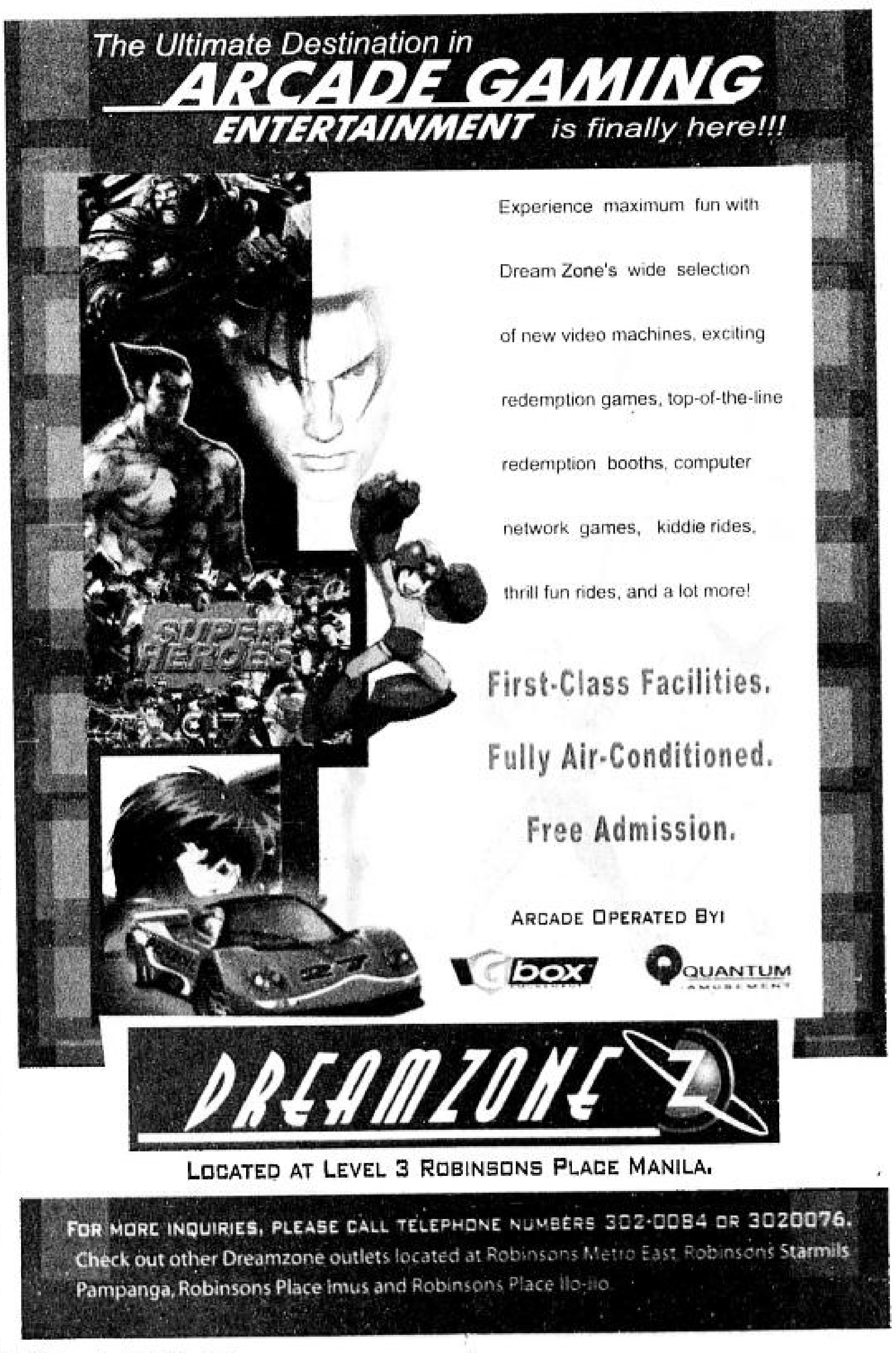
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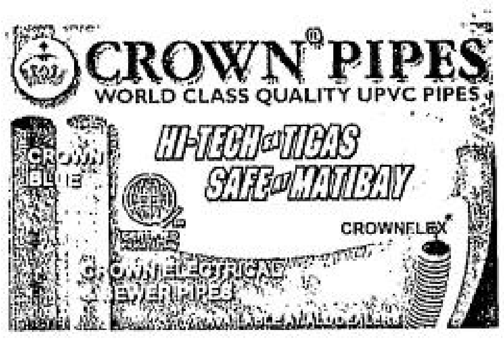

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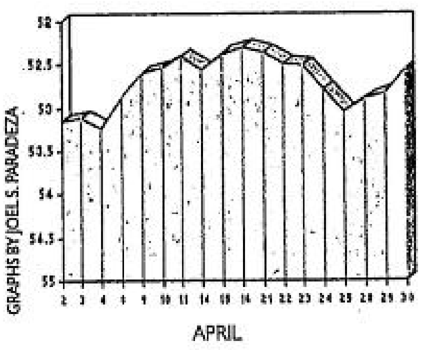

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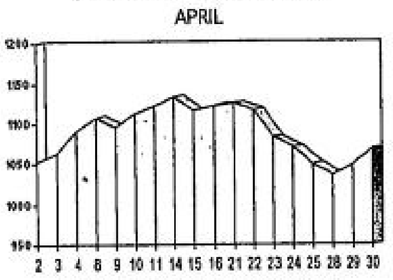
APRIL



(See stock market report on Page B4)

STOCKS ended higher yesterday, led by Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), as sentiment improved on news that the cash-strapped government likely exceeded its revenue targets in April.

Analysts said fears eased of a potential interest rate hike, resulting from a bloated budget deficit, that would hurt the debt positions of some listed companies.

The government blew through its deficit targets three times last year and missed the mark again in the first quarter of 2003, largely due to collection shortfalls by the tax agency.

The main stock index rose 1.89 percent or 19.78 points to 1,068.15. It is up 4.88 percent this year.

Turnover grew to P370.6 million from Tuesday's P207.3 million. Gainers beat losers 36 to 19 and there were 32 stocks unchanged.

"Reports that the government likely exceeded its revenue collection target in April is welcome news. This eased worries about another big budget deficit blow-out," said AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan.

National Treasurer Sergio Edeza said on Tuesday the tax, customs and other government agencies likely beat their revenue collection targets for April.

Government officials said the improvement meant it was on track to meet its full-year deficit target of P202 billion, or around 4.6 percent of gross domestic product.

BPI Securities stocks analyst Roberto Cano expected the market to sustain the positive mood when it opens on Monday after a four-day weekend for the Labor Day holiday.

Reuters

By Clarissa S. Batino

WHILE the outbreak of the deadly pneumonia virus posed a serious threat to the growth of economies in the region, the Philippines was not as vulnerable as its neighbors given its relatively slight dependence on income from tourism.

In separate studies, HSBC, JP Morgan Chase, and UBS Warburg noted that while anecdotal evidence tend to suggest that economic growth particularly in Hong Kong and Singapore would be affected, the impact of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS was seen to be temporary.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri yesterday reiterated his view that there was no need at this point to recast any economic target this year.

"Any impact is seen only on tourism, which may be offset by increased local travel," Neri said.

The foreign banks believed that the more dependent a country was on its tourism industry, the more likely its economy was to be hit. Exports may also be affected but at a lesser degree.

JP Morgan said that much of the SARS blow would fall in the current quarter and peak before the third quarter although it did not rule out the possibility that the ill-effects of the deadly virus could spillover to the second semester.

"The Philippine economy does not show the same excessive dependence on tourism income as its bigger Asean neighbors. This is clearly an asset in an environment being ravaged by SARS," said HSBC in its recent report.

The Philippines has the lowest tourist arrivals of 1.9 million yearly spending also the lowest at $1.5 billion annually or 4 percent of the country's merchandise and services exports.

Hong Kong, for instance, has about 16.6 million visitors in a year spending about $10 billion. China's estimated 97.9 million annual tourists usually spend about $20 billion.

The foreign banks noted that crude oil prices remained a more influential factor to the Philippine economy than tourism since oil imports accounted for 4.1 percent of the country's gross domestic product while tourism was equivalent to only 2.9 percent.

UBS, however, said that like Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, the Philippines might be vulnerable if one would consider net tourism income or spending by foreigners minus spending of Filipino tourists abroad.

The Philippines also has a high percentage of direct and indirect employment in tourism, accounting for 9.7 percent of total employment or almost the same level as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia.

BIR says Malate a hub of tax violators, too

By Michelle V. Remo

THE MALATE area is not just a favorite nightspot with its bars, restaurants and a host of entertainment establishments. It is also a hub of tax violators as well.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue reported yesterday that a high level of tax violations, including the non-issuance of receipts, were committed by small and well-known establishments in Malate and Intramuros in Manila, among them Café Rio, Zamboanga Restaurant, Aristrocrat, Bacolod Chicken, May Sum Restaurant, Barrio Fiesta and Jade Vine.

The bureau said that of the 379 establishments it checked for tax compliance, 376 or more than 99 percent were found to have committed violations ranging from the non-registration of business to the use of unregistered receipts, use of multiple sets of receipts, failure to maintain books of accounts and use of unregistered cash register machines.

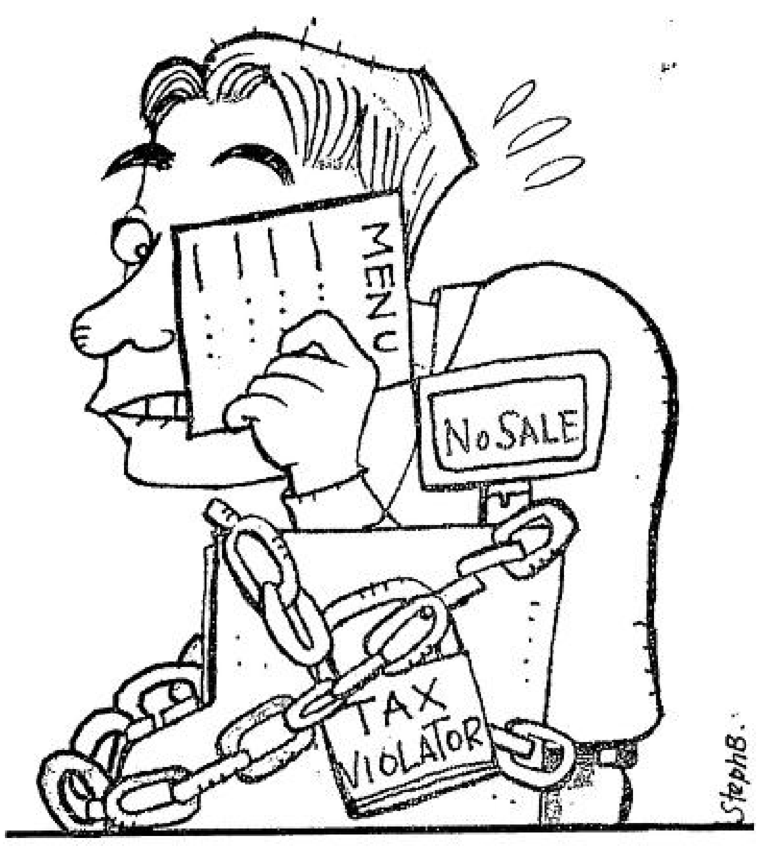
The BIR was able to uncover the proliferation of erring establishments in the area during a night operation last week, where about 250 revenue officials were fielded to check on their tax compliance.

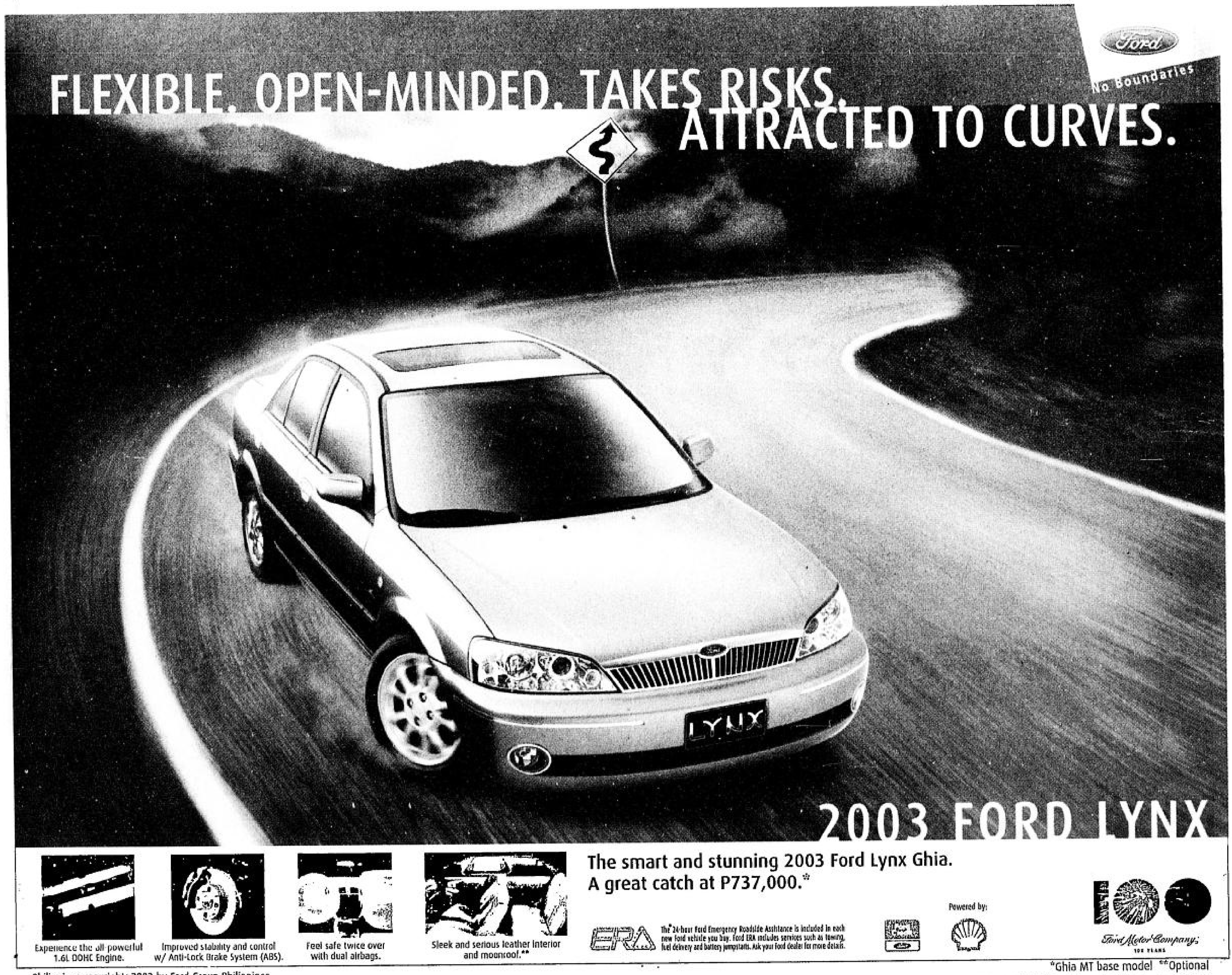
The BIR personnel, personally headed by Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr., Regional Director Ruperto Somera and Revenue District Officer Zenaida Garcia, saturated the nightspots until midnight.

Garcia said she expected to uncover more violations in the coming days as she received reports that her area of jurisdiction was swamped with eateries, restaurants, motels, inns, pawnshops, money changers, hardware stores, parlors, fast-food chains, amusement centers and shops that were believed to be non-compliant with the country's tax laws.

"I am giving a warning to business establishments to start complying with the BIR's regulations

BIR/B3





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PNB ends losing streak, nets ₱53M in 1st quarter

By Elena R. Torrijos

AFTER five years of losses, Philippine National Bank yesterday said that it was back in the black with a profit of P53 million for the first quarter of this year.

The profit figure represented a turnaround from the P783-million loss posted in the same period last year as well as a pay-off from the rehabilitation program signed by the national government and the Lucio Tan group in May last year.

Under the rehabilitation program, P25 billion in loans granted to the bank by the government were settled, restructured or converted into preferred shares.

In a statement yesterday, PNB, one of the country's largest lenders, said that gross revenue in the first quarter reached P3.04 billion of which 58 percent came from interest income.

Actual interest income went down slightly by one percent because of reduced loan receivable levels but this was more than offset by income from other sources.

Other income grew 25.8 percent to P1.2 billion fueled largely by increased fee-based business and recoveries from acquired assets.

Also, the bank's low-cost savings deposits climbed P16 billion or 17.4 percent from P92 billion on March 31 last year to P108 billion this year while time deposits dipped by P2 billion to P26 billion.

PNB said it also expected to further accelerate deposit growth with the launching of Bagong Bayani Libre Pablowout, a year-long promotion to encourage OFWs and their relatives to invest their excess funds with the bank; and Priority One, which taps high networth clients with value-paced checking accounts that give travel and other perks.

"The bank is expected to post favorable interest margins and a healthier fee-based income with the rollout of its new organizational structure geared toward transforming the bank's 324-strong domestic branches into a lean and mean service organization," it said.

Among the thrusts of PNB this year is to vigorously cross-sell insurance products to its more than 2 million depositors and open new branches in strategic locations overseas.

Moreover, a team is devoted to marketing or acquisitions and whose primary task is to sell the bank's products and services and provide financial advice to customers.

RP'S FIRST GATEFOLD PRINT AD

INQUIRER president Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez presents to Globe Telecom president Gerardo Ablaza Jr., business group heads Ferdz dela Cruz and Gil B. Genio the framed Globe gatefold ad, the first in local advertising history. The INQUIRER is the first to use the panoramic ad format in the country. Joining the luncheon ceremony are Inq7 president Paulo Prieto, INQUIRER senior vice president for corporate services David Valdes, senior vice president for finance Luis Ymson, readers' advocate lawyer Raul Palabrica, corporate relations manager Celine Madamba, publisher Isagani Yambot, senior vice president for sales and marketing Rene Reinoso, vice president Pepito Olarte and board member Dennis Valdes.

Retailers laud tax on 'tiangge' operators

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S retailers yesterday hailed the Bureau of Internal Revenue for the recent issuance of a ruling that requires "tiangge" or privilege store operators to pay taxes as well.

The Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) said in a statement that the new revenue regulation addressed the perennial issue of leveling the playing field between mainstream businessmen and privilege store operators, and said the ruling erased the gap between the two sectors in terms of paying duties to the government.

Paul Angelo Santos, PRA vice president for national affairs, said the group had constant talks with the BIR to air concerns of legitimate businesses about the proliferation of privilege stores that directly compete with them without paying the taxes that they are required to pay.

The PRA also said the ruling would help the BIR in its current efforts to increase revenue collection, as it was one way to plug revenue leaks coming from the income of privilege store operators who were not paying any taxes to the government.

"The new regulation has made it easier for those subject to it to contribute their rightful share to the government, (bringing) them to the ranks of responsible and law-abiding businessmen," the PRA added.

Reports quoted Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho as saying the mode of tax collection imposed on privilege store operators was "within the realm of authority of the DOF and the BIR," and said the growing popularity of these stores rk0.2

equired the BIR to come up with a move to plug revenue leakages and thus appropriate taxes.

Under Revenue Regulation 16-2003, a privilege store operator is required to pay a business tax of P150 a day or P4,000 a month, and an income tax of P50 a day or P1,500 per month.

The BIR ruling also required privilege storeowners to register their businesses with the respective revenue district office and disallowed them from setting up shops without paying the said taxes.

The BIR said that the advance payment of the taxes would be credited against the actual business and income taxes due from such stores for the taxable period for which the payments were made.

Privilege store operators should pay the monthly taxes to the BIR through authorized agent banks or assigned revenue district offices, the BIR said.

Privilege stores, the BIR defines, are stalls or outlets that are not permanently fixed on a ground and are normally set up in shopping malls, hospitals, office buildings, hotels, villages, subdivisions, churches, parks, streets and other places which sell a variety of goods and services within a brief duration of time.

A case is still a case

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

FELIPE Gozon, chair and president of GMA Network Inc., the owner of Channel 7, just did what he had said he would do to the big cable TV companies.

The other day, his lawyers filed a case before the National Telecommunications Commission, or NTC, against Skycable, Home Cable and Pilipino Cable.

Together those cable TV companies control about 34 others all over the country. That's enough, according to the GMA-7 complaint, to constitute a monopoly.

Moreover, GMA-7 said that its signal on cable TV in "mega" Manila was distorted unexplainably, which led to a significant drop in its ratings on cable TV alone.

Maybe Henry Gozon has the ears of the three NTC commissioners, namely, Armi Janer Borje, Kathleen Heceta, and Jorge Sarmiento. They are all good women—and man!

* * *

BUT really, how useful is a favorable NTC ruling to GMA-7, assuming that it can get any ruling? Gigantic media companies are the ones fighting here among themselves.

Among GMA-7's prayers, perhaps aside from its people being spared from SARS, is for the NTC to declare those cable TV firms as an illegal monopoly.

Thus, the merger of Sky and Home into Beyond Cable, and their acquisition of those 34 other cable TV companies, should be declared null and void. Hmm.

Behind Sky Cable is the Lopez conglomerate, which is into everything, while Home Cable enjoys the backing of the country's biggest telecoms company PLDT.

Henry Gozon may have the facts and figures to convince NTC to grant his GMA-7 its prayers to stop the mergers and acquisition of cable TV companies.

Okay then, but what happens next?

* * *

ON paper alone, GMA-7 must have spent a fortune for that NTC case. Its pleadings must weigh a ton. It's about two inches thick, mostly annexes.

The way I see it, in its NTC case, GMA-7 is really out to play the high stakes game known as —no, not GKNB—the TV ratings game.

GMA-7 talks to the NTC about its poor signal on cable. It said it got more than 4,000 complaints of "signal distortion" in mega-Manila alone.

Almost 80 percent of those complaints came from subscribers of Home and Sky (or Beyond Cable) and Sun Cable Systems, which the Lopez group also owns.

For both the Lopez group's ABS-CBN and GMA-7, which are the same networks monopolizing the advertising budgets of business, the ratings dictate their income.

* * *

BET on it, a favorable ruling from NTC can open up the advertising cash vault to GMA-7. The network believes that if it gets clear cable signals, that's it, its ratings will go up.

In the ABS-CBN camp, nevertheless, they talk about programming as the key to high ratings. It's not publicity, they say, at least not on that case against cable TV.

Well, both networks are guilty of trying to outdo each other in publicity. Besides, remember this, a case is still a case...

Anyway, the other prayer of GMA-7 to the NTC is an order to the cable TV companies to maintain the quality of signals for ALL networks.

That, as I said, GMA-7 thinks will give it billions of pesos more in advertising income. And I don't think that it is not enough for Henry Gozon.

From what I gather, his lawyers are already deep into work on some more cases. This time, they will seek ... well, "damages." Oops, more money involved.

* * *

WHO is going to keep the rest of the money?

The money is some P70 million which the DOTC is demanding from the contractors of the new airport terminal in Davao City.

Its construction started in January of 2000, and based on the time table of the contractors, it should have been finished in June last year.

Almost a year delayed, and still counting, the project suffers from poor design. Some of the building beams are ... well, "not right."

From what I gather, somebody at the DOTC is rather "agreeable." He is inclined to let the contractors spend much less than P70 million for the repair of those beams.

* * *

NOBODY knows if DOTC head Larry Mendoza, the former PNP chief, knows about the "deal" of that particular somebody under him. I can't say what Larry will do to the guy.

But just recently, Larry was rumored to have treated another Cabinet official to a resounding slap in the face for meddling in his department's affairs.

You see, based on the recommendation of the ASEP, or the Association of Structural Engineers of the Philippines, some 200 beams at the airport should be repaired.

To save money, the contractors do not want to follow the ASEP recommendation. They only want to do 50 or so beams. They can save up to P40 million. Where will it go?

And for the sake of the taxpayers out there, the contractors are Hanjin of South Korea for construction, and the Davao Airport Council, or the DAC, for supervision.

DAC is made up of the biggest names in local construction. DAC, of all things, is arranging with the DOTC to do the repair itself.

The question is, if DAC is the supervisor of the project, who will supervise it when it does the repairs? Maybe it's Hanjin.

* * *

IN March this year, this cute administration of Gloriaetta posted the highest—again, the HIGHEST—monthly budget deficit in a long while of P28 billion.

In banking, therefore, they are already anticipating the budget deficit problem to worsen. Translation—higher interest rates.

All signs point to a failure of the government to manage its finances well. In the past quarter, for instance, it was able to hit its revenue targets.

For this quarter, BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno also promises that he will hit his collection target.

Yet, if the revenue targets are being met, how come the budget deficit keeps on swelling. Maybe the targets are too low. Or maybe the government just spends too much.

* * *

FROM what I gather, the DBM has stopped the release of funds other than the salary of government employees.

If you are collecting from government offices, therefore, maybe you should expect a lot of runaround from now until the deficit problem is solved.

That, if you ask me, may take forever. You see, the only solution is for the government to sell assets. In this kind of market, it cannot.

The stock market, for one, is dead. And it's partly thanks to the SSS and the GSIS. They are still the only pension funds in the world which do not bother with the stock market at all.

* * *

EVERY Tuesday, with or without SARS, take your dose of SPIT at the Comfort Room.

The SPIT is short for Silly People's Improv Theater, and the Comfort Room is a comedy bar on Jupiter Street in Makati. You know—where the IO karaoke is.

A group of young, funny men and women formed the SPIT about a year ago, tirelessly honing their skills for impromptu comedy all that time, before they could dare to go out in public.

The result, if you ask me, is a riot. Improv (i.e. no script) comedy is new here. The SPIT dares to try. I thought they are succeeding. Go ahead, see for yourselves.

4-month Peza investments up

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

INVESTMENTS in economic zones surged nearly 30 percent in the first four months this year, according to the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza).

In a speech during Peza's annual recognition night, Peza director general Lilia B. de Lima said that the robust investment flow from January to April this year indicate the steady return of investor confidence in the country.

Peza investments had been on the retreat over the last two years—down 48 percent to P80.8 billion in 2001 and 52 percent to P38.7 billion in 2002—due to shaky confidence of investors and gloomy outlook on the global economy.

Peza reported that total investments rose 28.18 percent to P6.41 billion in the first four months this year from P5 billion during the same period last year. Investments in April surged 143 percent to P2.86 billion from P1.18 billion during the same period a year ago.

Peza said these investments generated 13,455 new jobs or 3.85 percent higher than last year's employment generation of 12,956.

De Lima cited the strong investment flow into information technology firms, which surged 92 percent to P1.44 billion from P753 million during the same period last year.

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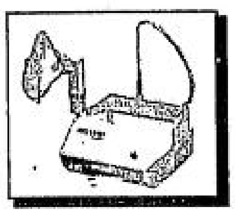
BIR says . . .

From page B1

on doing business, since our operation will be continual. We will be back, the day of which I will not announce, to check whether those we have apprehended will already comply with the tax laws," Garcia said.

The district officer said some of the establishments caught have already settled or expressed willingness to settle their cases with the BIR.

She said Café 'Rio, Barrio Fiesta and May Sum Restaurant have already paid penalty fees, while Jade Vine and Bacolod Chicken have already expressed willingness to pay these fees.



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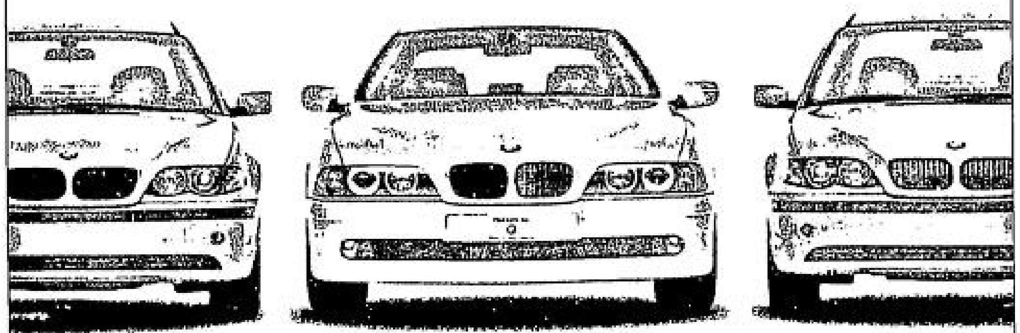

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IMF review to focus on RP fiscal outlook, growth prospects

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund yesterday said a team arriving next week to conduct a bi-annual review on the Philippines would zero in on the country's fiscal outlook as well as prospects for growth, inflation and external payments.

In a statement, the Fund said that the review being done under its post program monitoring was necessary considering that the Philippines' outstanding loans with the IMF stood at 100 percent more than its quota.

The country owes the IMF 1.1 billion in special drawing rights, worth about $1.5 billion or 126 percent of the country's quota.

The Philippines is scheduled to end its post-loan arrangement with the IMF by September. However, the program may be terminated only by the first quarter of 2004 considering that the country may be able to bring down its obligations with the Fund to below 100 percent of the quota only by October or November.

The IMF said it would continue to press the government to implement reforms in its fiscal framework including those on strengthening tax administration, broadening the revenue base, and ensuring a solid financial performance by government corporations and state-owned financial institutions.

The Fund was particularly interested in the developments in the power sector and the status of the privatization of the National Power Corp.

Napocor's financial problems have been a major concern of the IMF since the debts of the power agency has been bloating the country's consolidated public sector deficit.

Another concern was the status of the banking sector's bad loans and how this was being addressed in the context of the recently legislated Special Purpose Vehicle Law.

The mission arriving next week will be led by Sean Nolan, the former resident representative to the Philippines.

This round of review is slated for May 8 to May 20.

Unionbank sees 10% profit growth

By Elena R. Torrijos

UNION Bank of the Philippines, a publicly-listed universal bank affiliated with the Aboitiz group of Cebu, has projected a 10- to 15-percent increase in profit this year from P1.54 billion posted last year.

In a briefing with reporters yesterday, Unionbank president Victor Valdepeñas said the profit gain would come from an expected 20 to 25 percent increase in deposits and loan growth of between 5 and 10 percent.

Valdepeñas said the additional loans would come primarily from its consumer banking segment while gains on the corporate side would come from loan receivables financing.

He said the bank would invest in the conversion of 20 of its 112 branches this year into business class branches to attract more depositors, particularly businessmen.

The bank likewise expected to set aside roughly P300 million to cover for probable losses from non-performing loans.

Valdepeñas also said the bank would continue to rely on its own efforts to sell acquired assets.

SM PRIME EXPANSION
SM Prime Holdings Inc. chair Henry Sy Sr. (2nd from left) confers with his directors—Teresita Sy-Coson (left), Jose L. Cuisia (2nd from right) and vice chair Henry T. Sy Jr. (right)—during the company stockholders' meeting on April 28 at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel. During the meeting, the company announced that three malls would be opened this year in Baguio City, Lucena in Quezon Province and Marilao, Bulacan.

Beverage firm ordered to pay ₱2.6M in taxes

BAGUIO CITY—A beverage corporation has been directed by the Supreme Court to pay P2.6 million in tax deficiency after the company had erroneously deducted huge media advertising expense from its income tax dues.

In a decision released here Tuesday, the Supreme Court's third division found as "extraordinary" the P9.4 million spent by General Foods Phil. Inc. for advertising "Tang," a juice drink.

This means, the court ruled, that the amount used for promoting the product should not have been fully deducted as a business expense from the corporation's taxable income.

A tax dispute arose when the Bureau of Internal Revenue, through the commissioner, ruled that the corporation fell short of P2.635 million in income tax for the fiscal year that ended Feb. 28, 1985.

For that tax period, General Foods, which also markets "Calumet" and "Kool-Aid," deducted from its taxable income P9.46 million used for "Tang's" media blitz.

But the BIR disallowed 50 percent or P4.73 million of the claimed deduction, saying the media expense was not an ordinary business expense.

It then assessed the corporation P2.6 million in tax deficiency.

In addition, General Foods was asked to pay 25 percent of the amount as surcharge for late payment and 20 percent in annual interest starting Aug. 25, 1989, the date the corporation's tax protest was denied by the BIR, until the amount was paid.

General Foods brought the assessment to the Court of Tax Appeals which upheld BIR's levy.

Unsatisfied, the corporation elevated the issue to the Court of Appeals, which reversed the CTA.

The CA declared that the media expense incurred by General Foods was "necessary and ordinary," hence no deficiency tax should be imposed on the corporation.

But the Supreme Court ruled otherwise saying, in its 11-page decision, that the P9.4 million spent for promoting "Tang" was almost one-half of General Foods' total claim for marketing expenses. *Delmar Cariño, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

GMA-7 seen getting back old cable channel

By Abigail L. Ho

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission has ordered cable firms SkyCable Central CATV Inc. and Phil. Home Cable Holdings Inc. to comply with channel positioning rules or face the risk of losing their permits to operate.

In the NTC order, the cable operators are required to carry free-to-air television stations on the same channel numbers that they are transmitting in non-cable systems, whenever feasible.

If this is not technically feasible, the NTC said cable operators should at least carry free-to-air channels on the position nearest to its channel number on free television.

It said that changes in channel positions must be approved by the NTC, with the concerned broadcasting firms and cable subscribers duly informed before the changes were made.

The order was given in response to complaints by the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas and GMA Network Inc. that SkyCable and Home Cable changed the channel assignments of free-to-air television stations without properly informing the KBP and the broadcasting networks concerned.

"NTC's decision in this case becomes a precedent that is binding upon all cable TV operators who are similarly situated," GMA Network Inc. said in a statement yesterday.

In a letter to the NTC dated Feb. 3, GMA Network urged the regulatory body to look into SkyCable and Home Cable's "unilateral act of rechanneling" the broadcasting firm's station in Metro Manila.

GMA Network used to be seen on Channel 12 by SkyCable and Home Cable subscribers. It now occupies the Channel 14 position.

"The rechanneling was done arbitrarily without prior notice not only to the station but also to the public. This has sown confusion among television viewers and has also resulted in the degradation and distortion of GMA's signal," GMA Network said.

ABS-CBN projecting bigger telenovela exports

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. expects at least $1 million in revenue from every telenovela it will sell to overseas markets including Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Kenya.

In an interview yesterday, ABS-CBN director for distribution Reena Garingan said other countries, even those outside Asia, were ready markets for the high-budget telenovelas that the network had been doing in the past few years.

Primetime soaps including "Pangako sa 'yo," "Kay Tagal Kang Hinintay," "Bituin" and reallife-based drama anthology "Maalaala Mo Kaya" have the biggest potential in the international market at this point, she said.

Garingan revealed that ABS-CBN was positioning itself as a foreign program provider that could provide a wide range of programs, not only telenovelas but also movies and television programs.

Top-rating "Pangako sa 'yo" is already running in two Malaysian television stations and will also be seen in Kenya in October.

Garingan revealed that ABS-CBN was now "very close" to signing deals with some Malaysian, Indonesian and Vietnamese television firms for "Kay Tagal Kitang Hinintay" and the Nora Aunor-starrer "Bituin."

There was also an attempt to sell telenovelas to Latin American television stations, but Garingan said that these markets were not ready yet.

Aside from these popular telenovelas, ABS-CBN is also selling licenses for Star Cinema-produced films as well as other movies that it has rights to.

Garingan said ABS-CBN was currently distributing films like "Tanging Yaman," "Bata Bata Paano Ka Ginawa?" and "Anak" to countries in Eastern Europe.

European countries that get ABS-CBN's films include the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Sweden.

ABS-CBN also gets a big revenue boost from its satellite arm Global Limited that handles The Filipino Channel (TFC).

The cable channel last year posted around P2 billion in subscription earnings. *Abigail L. Ho*

Manila Midtown closing down

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BOARD of Robinsons Land Corp., the property arm of the Gokongwei group, is set to shut down the operations of the Manila Midtown Hotel starting May 31 this year in the wake of the downturn in the tourism industry.

But RLC chief for corporate planning BJ Sebastian yesterday said in an interview that the company would not sell the property. Instead, it will be redeveloped into a more profitable property venture.

"There are no definite plans yet but the property will be redeveloped," Sebastian said.

Manila Midtown Hotel is the Gokongwei group's first property development venture. It was built by the group in 1973 under a franchise agreement with Ramada Hotels International.

The 21-story hotel in Manila's tourist district is adjacent to RLC's Robinsons Place mall in Pedro Gil, corner Adriatico, Manila.

"The property is already old. It has been there for more than over two decades. It needs a fresh new look," Sebastian said.

Most likely, however, the property would not be redeveloped into another hotel.

With the closure of Manila Midtown, RLC still has three other hotels in its portfolio—Manila Galleria Suites, Robinsons Apartelle and the Cebu Midtown Hotel.

INTEREST RATES

April 30, 2003—MART1 Rates

Benchmark Interest Rates	MART1 30-Apr-03 (%)	MART1 29-Apr-03 (%)
1 Month	7.9271	7.8938
3 Months	8.1069	8.2045
6 Months	8.7942	8.9712
1 Year	9.6673	9.6731
2 Years	10.1652	10.2981
3 Years	10.7981	11.1058
4 Years	11.4577	11.6961
5 Years	11.7773	11.9692
7 Years	12.5542	12.8271
10 Years	12.9865	13.0846
20 Years	13.4423	13.5673
25 Years	14.0211	14.0846

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Wednesday, April 30, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	1,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	15.75	16.25	15.75	16.25	123,400
Bank of the Phil. Islands	36	36.5	35.5	36.5	378,600
China Banking Corp.	660	660	660	660	5,390
Citystate Savings Bank	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	24	24	24	24	105,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	27.5	29	27.5	29	147,600
Philippine National Bank	24	24.5	24	24.5	4,400
Phil. Savings Bank	26	27	26	27	5,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	10.25	10.25	10	10.25	7,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	17	17.25	17	17.25	9,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.42	1.44	1.42	1.42	15,815,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1360	1360	1350	1350	560
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1055	1055	1030	1030	2,230
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12	12.25	12	12.25	4,800
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.71	0.76	0.71	.74	10,460,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	535	555	535	550	95,970
ISM Communications Corp.	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	1,000,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	3	3	3	3	10,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.32	0.34	0.32	.33	7,080,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	367.5	382.5	367.5	380	140,850
Ivantage Corp.	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.39	240,000
Philweb Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	.013	600,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	6.7	7	6.7	6.8	140,000
Manila Electric Co. B	9.7	10.25	9.7	10.25	993,000
Petron Corp.	1.98	2.08	1.98	2.06	9,093,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.95	0.95	.95	500,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.48	1.48	1.46	1.46	12,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.42	2.46	2.42	2.46	84,000
Negros Navigation Co. Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	.5	50,000
William, Gothong & Aboitiz	2	2	2	2	25,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.57	0.58	0.56	0.56	3,220,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.1	0.1	0.1	.1	70,000
Union Cement Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.68	.68	60,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	95,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	16	16.5	16	16.5	1,025,200
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	31	31	31	31	9,600
RFM Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	70,000
San Miguel Corp. A	55.5	56.5	55	56.5	959,200
San Miguel Corp. B	66	66	66	66	136,500
Universal Robina Corp.	4	4	4	4	452,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	20,000
Ayala Corp.	4	4	3.95	4	4,002,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	61,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.024	0.024	.024	100,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.62	.62	10,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	.2	30,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.3	2.32	2.3	2.32	6,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.195	0.22	0.195	.215	14,390,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.245	0.245	1,860,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	8.1	8.1	8	8	90,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.16	.16	70,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	50,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.52	0.52	0.52	.52	60,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.58	0.59	0.58	0.58	260,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	4,450,000
Music Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	1,630,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Corro-Coat Inc	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	12,000
Metro Alliance Holdings	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	40,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.96	1.98	1.88	1.96	214,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	20	22	20	20	23,300
SPI Technologies Inc.	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	10,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.41	0.43	0.41	.43	5,490,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	200,000
Mondragon Intl Phils. Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	.17	10,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	15,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	11.25	12.25	11.25	12	276,000
Pldt 10% Pref Series Aa	10	10	10	10	1,000
WGA - Preferred	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.2	42,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.95	5.1	4.95	5	4,068,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	400,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.195	0.195	0.19	.195	2,070,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	.17	200,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	0.86	0.88	0.86	.86	12,690,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.16	2.16	2.16	2.16	110,000
City & Land Developers	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	.2	20,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	4.75	4.95	4.75	4.9	5,483,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	40,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.185	0.19	0.185	0.19	350,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.185	0.19	0.185	.19	900,000
Omico Corp.	0.0044	0.0044	0.004	0.0044	149,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.014	.014	500,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.25	0.25	0.25	.25	50,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.27	0.27	0.26	.26	400,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.014	0.014	0.013	.013	3,500,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	50,000

DISCLOSURES

CENTRAL Azucarera de Tarlac announced the appointment of Jose Manuel Lopa and Fulgencio Factoran Jr. as members of its audit committee. Ernesto Teopaco was appointed member of the nomination committee.

* * *

THE CHANGE in the name of La Tondeña Distillers Inc. to Ginebra San Miguel Inc. will be reflected in the Philippine Stock Exchange's computer system on May 5.

* * *

PICOP Resources Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 25.

* * *

ELECTED directors of Bogo-Medellin Milling Co. Inc. were Alfred Acopan, Reynaldo Bandolon, Pedro Francisco Jr., Lauren Hanson, Robert Kwok, Elisa Ramos and George Olivar.

* * *

THE BOARD of Robinsons Land Corp. authorized the cessation of the hotel operations of Manila Midtown Hotel effective May 31, 2003.

* * *

ELECTED directors of First Metro Investment Corp. were Antonio Abacan Jr., Mary Vy Ty, Francisco Sebastian, Francisco Co, Solomon Cua, Martin Dy Buncio, Florencio Mallare, Menardo Jimenez and Jerry Angping.

* * *

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 27, 2 p.m. at Club Filipino, Greenhills, San Juan. Only stockholders of record as of April 30 are entitled to participate in the meeting.

* * *

CITY & Land Developers Inc. declared 12.5-percent stock dividends in favor of stockholders of record as of June 18 and will be payable on July 11.

* * *

ALSONS Consolidated Resources Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 25, 3 p.m. at the Linden Suites, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

April 30, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.902690	1.000000	52.817000
Japan	Yen	0.007533	0.008345	0.440800
United Kingdom	Pound	1.439429	1.594600	84.222000
Hongkong	Dollar	0.115747	0.128225	6.772500
Switzerland	Franc	0.662914	0.734376	38.787500
Canada	Dollar	0.625695	0.693145	36.609800
Singapore	Dollar	0.508386	0.563190	29.746000
Australia	Dollar	0.559218	0.619502	32.720200
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.394531	2.652661	140.105600
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.240724	0.266674	14.084900
Brunei	Dollar	0.506958	0.561608	29.662400
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000104	0.000115	0.006100
Thailand	Baht	0.021046	0.023315	1.231400
UAE	Dirham	0.245784	0.272279	14.381000
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.107800	58.510700
Argentina	Peso	0.316733	0.350877	18.532300
Brazil	Real	0.310844	0.344353	18.187700
Denmark	Kroner	0.134640	0.149154	7.877900
India	Rupee	0.019096	0.021155	1.117300
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.237582	0.263193	13.901100
Mexico	New Peso	0.087750	0.097210	5.134300
New Zealand	Dollar	0.502891	0.557103	29.424500
Norway	Kroner	0.128190	0.142009	7.500500
Pakistan	Rupee	0.015645	0.017331	0.915400
South Africa	Rand	0.125942	0.139519	7.369000
Korea	Won	0.000744	0.000824	0.043500
Sweden	Kroner	0.109756	0.121588	6.421900
Syria	Pound	0.021493	0.023810	1.257600
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025947	0.028744	1.518200
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000566	0.000627	0.033100

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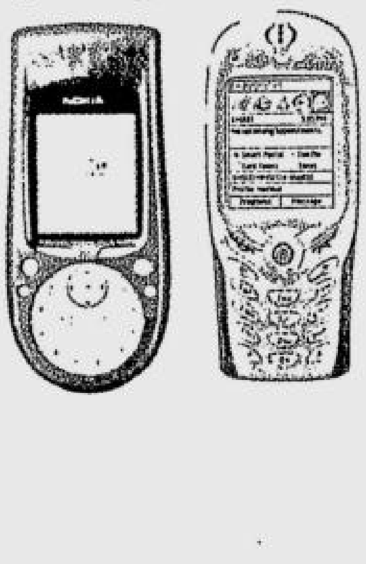

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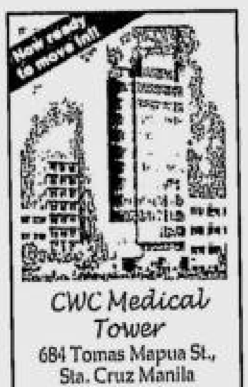
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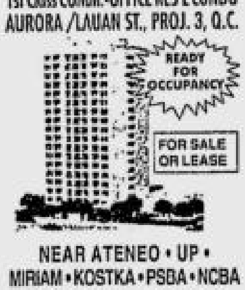

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UNI-PRESIDENT (PHILIPPINES) CORPORATION

NOTICE OF SPECIAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

Please be notified that there shall be a Special Stockholders Meeting of UNI-PRESIDENT (PHILIPPINES) CORPORATION to be held on 30 May 2003, Friday, regarding the dissolution of the corporation at 10:00 a.m. at its principal office at Unit-2004A, East Tower, PSE Center, Exchange Road, Ortigas, Pasig City, to discuss the following agenda

I. Call to Order
II. Proof of Notice / Certification Of Quorum
III. Ratification of a Board Resolution resolving to Voluntarily Dissolve the Corporation
IV. Other Matters
V. Adjournment

(Sgd.) LORNA PATAJO-KAPUNAN
Corporate Secretary

(PDI--May 1, 8 & 15, 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
Office of the City Civil Registrar
Kanhuraw Hill City Hall Annex Bldg.,
Tacloban City

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance to Section 5 of R.A. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that MARIA ALMA ALIGNO-CANDIDO has filed with this Office a petition for change of first name from ALMA to MARIA ALMA in the Birth Certificate of MARIA ALMA ALIGNO-CANDIDO who was born on August 20, 1955 at Cebu City and whose parents are LUCILA D. MALAGAR and PATERNO L. ALIGNO.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this Office not later than April 29, 2003.

(Sgd.) MISS JUDY H. BORJA
City Civil Registrar

(PDI – May 1, 2003)

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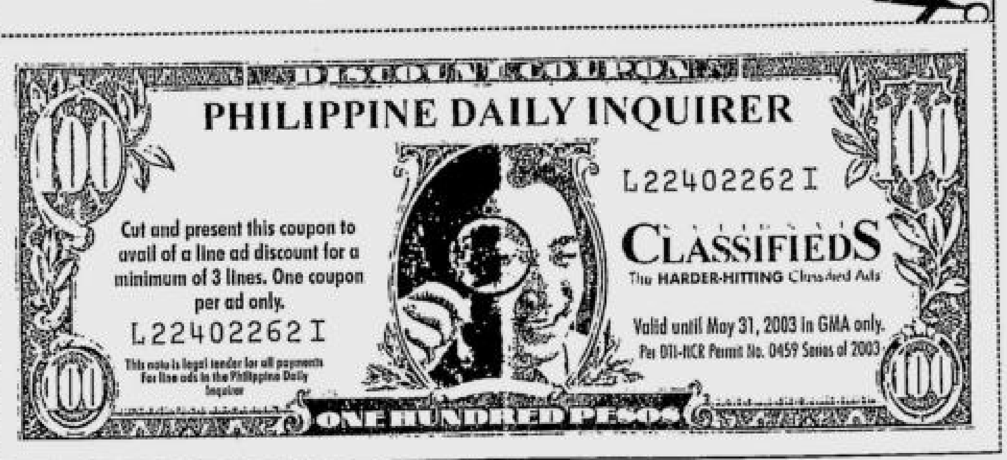

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OBITUARIES

NICANOR B. BILLONES, SR.

Lapaz, Iloilo City

Died peacefully on April 29, 2003
at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center at the age of 82.

He is survived by his wife **Angelina**; children **Virgie & Capt. Toto** (†) **& Julie. Hermie & Pabs, Neneng & Celo, Nene & Behrouz, Nonoy & Emma**; grandchildren, brother & sister, sisters-in-law, nephews, nieces, other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Sampaloc Chapel, La Funeraria Paz (inside Manila Memorial Park) Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Sunday, May 4, 2003 at the Everest Hills Memorial Park, Susana Heights, Muntinlupa after a 9:00 a.m. Mass.

Our dearly beloved Mamang

CONSOLACION LARDIZABAL FIGUERAS

of Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya

Peacefully joined our Lord on April 22, 2003 at the age of 76.

Her husband **Pepe** (deceased); loving children **Joseph and Flor, Evelyn and Albert, Colet and Jeorge, Maritess and Jess, Mila and Eddimar**; grandchildren **Mae, Gladys, Mariel, Florence Joy, Ryan, AJ, Jake, Jamie, Drel**; brothers and sisters **Sr. Mary Emmanuel, Salvador and Josie, Nenette, Juanito, Luis and Lucille, Margie**; nephews and nieces and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Interment today, May 1, 2003 at Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya.

SANTIAGO "Badjie" M. CASTRO, JR.

Peacefully joined our Creator on April 27, 2003 at the age of 47.

A loving husband to his wife **Resty**; responsible father to his children and children-in-law **Sarah & Mike, Joy, Nicky & Janice**, and **Mark** and a sweet "Papa" to his granddaughter **Angel Athena**. One of the funeral directors of La Funeraria Paz, Inc. who have served the company for 18 years.

His body lies in state at Imperial Chapel of La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation will take place on Thursday, May 1, 2003 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at La Funeraria Paz Crematory.

CLASSIFIEDS

PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION

Building 1, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Nos. 893-6001 to 47 local 2101-2104
Direct Line: 840-2024/Fax No.: (632) 840-1459

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY, PREQUALIFICATION AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility/prequalification and to submit sealed bids for the **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) for Batangas to Manila Gas Pipeline (PM03-556).**

The approved budget for this contract is Php2,500,000.00.

Only contractors who will comply with PNOC EC's eligibility and prequalification requirements shall be allowed to participate in the public bidding.

Prequalification and Tender Documents shall be available for issuance at the above address from the Operations Services Group (c/o Mr. George N. Alejandro and Mr. Emmanuelito A. Ababol) from May 5 to 19, 2003, upon presentation of a Letter of Intent and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PESOS: Five Hundred (PHP 500.00).

Sealed bids in two (2) sets shall be received by Contracts Administration not later than **3:00 P.M. of May 30, 2003 at PNOC EC Conference Room Bldg. 1 of the above address and then publicly opened at 3:15 P.M. of the same date**.

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **May 23, 2003, 2:00 P.M. at the PNOC EC Conference Room, Bldg. 1 of the above address.**

The public bidding shall incorporate the electronic bid submission, using the ITBF system. Deadline for submission of Eligibility Requirements, Bid and Tender Documents will be set during the Pre-Bidding Conference.

PNOC EC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, or to accept such bids or to award any part thereof to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered most advantageous to PNOC EC.

This publication is also posted at DBM Website: www.procurementservices.net

(Sgd.) Rufino B. Bomasang
President and CEO

(PDI--May 1, 2003)

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NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region X, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City
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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) Region X** invites all interested parties to register and apply for Eligibility and to Bid for the following projects:

Location	Project	Approved Budget	Calendar days for Completion
Sector A:			
Baraas, Iligan City	Reroofing and repainting of warehouse (100,000 cav. cap.)	2,000,000.00	90
Baloy, CDO	Reroofing, repair and repainting of warehouse (100,000 cav. cap.)	2,273,000.00	90
Patag, CDO	Reroofing, repair and repainting of warehouse (50,000 cav. cap.)	1,141,985.26	60
Aglayan, Malaybalay City Bukidnon	Reroofing and repainting of warehouse (50,000 cav. cap.)	1,164,722.81	60
Sector B:			
Trento, Agusan del Sur	Reroofing, repair and repainting of warehouse (100,000 cav. cap.)	1,400,000.00	90
Libertad, Butuan City	Heightening of warehouse flooring (100,000 cav. cap.)	1,100,000.00	90

Submission of Letter of Intent and eligibility requirements to the RBAC Secretariat c/o **Ms. Emma P. Asiñero**, 2nd Floor Regional Office No. X, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City, shall be made from **May 15-21, 2003** during office hours. Bid documents shall be available for issuance until **June 6-12, 2003** to eligible bidders only or his authorized representative with Special Power of Attorney upon payment of One Thousand Two Hundred (P1,200.00) Pesos per project in the form of Cash or Cashier's Check in favor of the NFA, which is non-refundable.

A Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled on **July 3, 2003**, 10:00 a.m. for Sector A and 1:00 p.m. for Sector B at the Regional Office Conference Room. Bidders are required to submit their queries in writing to the RBAC Secretariat two (2) days prior to the Pre-Bid Conference.

Deadline for the submission of Bid Documents is on **July 18, 2003**, 10:00 a.m., for Sector A and 2:00 p.m. for Sector B, after which the opening of bid envelopes shall immediately follow.

NFA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to waive any defect or informality, assume no obligation whatsoever or indemnify to the bidder any expense or loss that it may incur in the preparation of its bid, and to accept only such bids or to award to any contractor whose bid is considered most advantageous to the NFA.

APPROVED:

(Sgd.) **FLO G. PASCUAL**
Regional Director

(PDI - May 1 & 7, 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS

DEPARTMENT ORDER NO. 2003-24
10 April 2003

SUBJECT: AN ORDER AMENDING CERTAIN SECTIONS OF DEPARTMENT ORDER NO. 2002-31

For effective implementation of the mandatory emission test by the Private Emission Testing Centers (PETCs) prior to registration and to best serve the public, Item No. 2 of the Department Order No. 2002-31 is hereby modified, to wit:

> "to ensure that "cut throat" or "ruinous" competition that may result to the degradation of level of service of the project is avoided, authorization of PETC should strictly be rationalized taking into consideration the vehicle population expected to be serviced in the area. As basis, one (1) PETC lane shall be authorized for every 12,000 registered vehicles in an LTO registering district. This is subject to amendment based on the validation of supply and demand for the services giving due consideration to time and motion analyses of vehicles being submitted for emission test. Attached for reference is the updated PETC lane requirement versus LTO District Office."

To ensure integrity in the conduct of emission test by authorized PETC, the following shall be instituted:

1. A monitoring team is hereby composed as follows:

Undersecretary Arturo T. Valdez	- Chairman
Asst. Secretary Roberto T. Lastimoso	- Vice Chairman
DOTC Director for Transport Planning Service	- Member
DOTC Chief Road Transport Planning Division	- Member
LTO Chief Management Information Division	- Member

The committee is further instructed to issue monitoring guidelines including penalty provisions thereof consistent with existing laws and rules and regulations relative thereto.

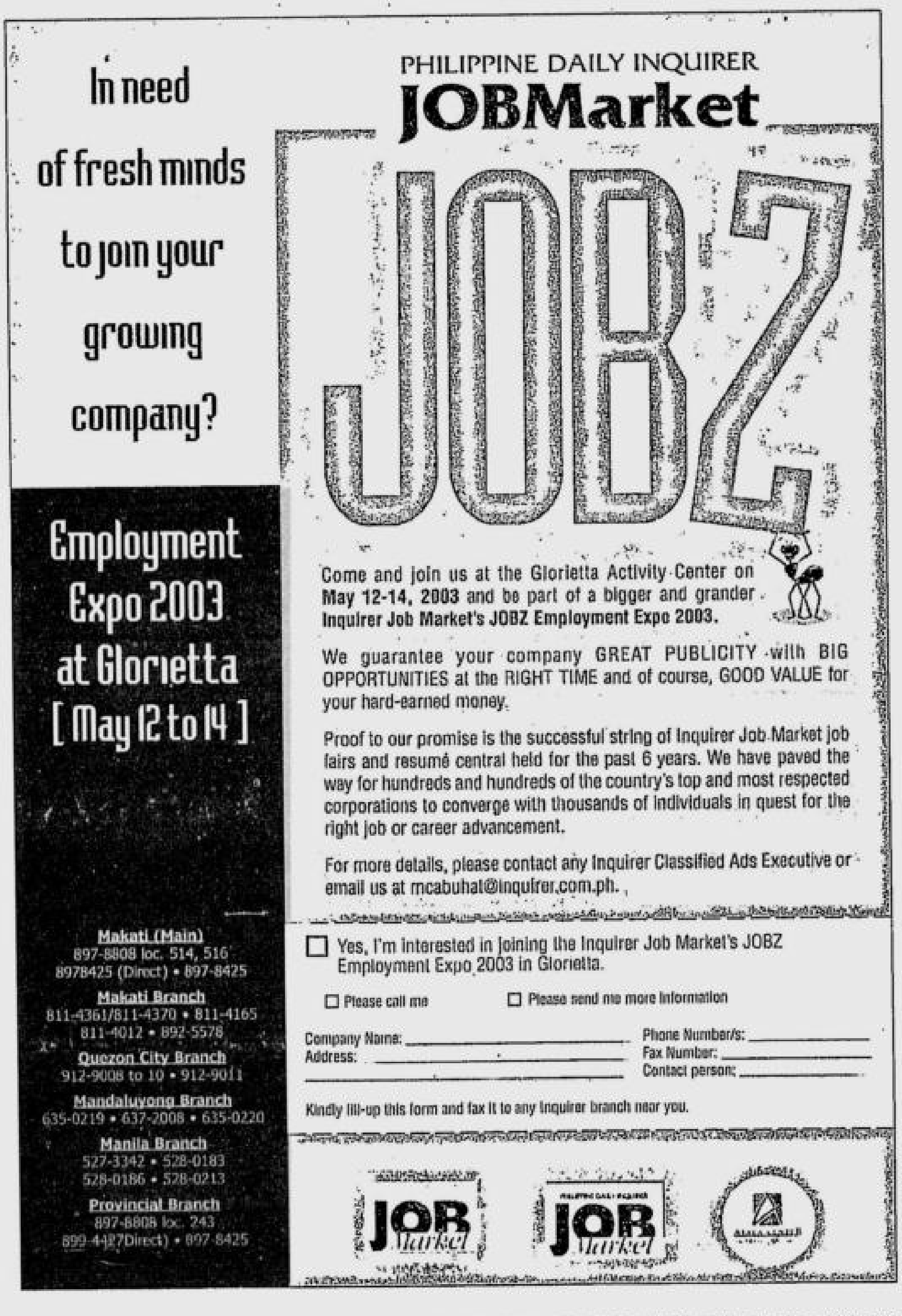
2. An accountable Certificate of Emmission Compliance (CEC) form which shall reflect the result of the test conducted shall be issued by DOTC-LTO for all authorized PETC. The same shall be distributed to all authorized PETC only and at actual production cost.

All orders, memoranda in conflict with herein provisions are deemed superseded.

This order shall take effect immediately.

(Sgd.) **LEANDRO R. MENDOZA**
Secretary

(PDI--May 1, 2003)



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V.Y. DOMINGO Diamonds & Gems, Inc., opened a jewellery showroom and pawnshop at Intrepid Plaza, Libis Quezon City last April 12, 2003. The ceremonial cutting of ribbon was headed by Miss Dzeljla Jlavovic, Ms. Earth 2002, Miss Justin Davionza, Ms. Philippines Air 2002, Mr. Pacifico Maghakot, representative of Mayor Sonny Belmonte and Miss Gigi de Guzman. The event was marked with a jewellery sale as a treat to all those who came with intention to purchase from the exquisite collection displayed with much lowered price tags.

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- Professional Retouching Techniques
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- Editing Essentials in Final Cut Pro 3
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June 06, 2003
- Inside FreeHand MX
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- Energizing Flash MX Projects with Action Script
- Flash for Corporate Presentation
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US consumer confidence posts biggest jump in 12 yrs

WASHINGTON—US consumer confidence took the biggest leap in 12 years in April as US forces seized Iraq and vanquished lingering war fears, a survey by the Conference Board showed Tuesday.

The private research group's consumer confidence index shot up 19.6 points—the biggest jump since March 1991—to 81.0 points in April, the research group said.

"The swift outcome in the Middle East has helped quell consumers' short-term concerns," Conference Board consumer research center director Lynn Franco said.

Wall Street's blue-chip index, the Dow Jones industrials average, rose 31.381 points or 0.37 percent to 8,502.99.

"Obviously the consumer confidence report, which was better-than-expected, is positive for the market," said Peter Cardillo, chief strategist at Global Partners Securities.

The index is made up of two components: people's feelings about the future and the current situation. The expectations index leapt 23.4 points to 84.8. The present situation index soared 13.9 points to 75.3.

The proportion of consumers expecting more jobs to be available rose to 16.7 percent in April from 10.8 percent in March, and those expecting fewer jobs dropped to 20.9 percent.

The ratio of people expecting better business conditions in the next six months surged to 18.7 percent in April from 13 percent in March. Those expecting a deterioration dropped to 12.3 percent from 20.0 percent. *AFP*

World economy faces risks even after Iraq war—IMF

WASHINGTON—The global economy faces risks even after the Iraq war, International Monetary Fund managing director Horst Koehler warned Tuesday.

"The world economy continues to face uncertainty," Koehler told a Council of the Americas conference here at which he expressed optimism over Latin America's outlook.

The IMF's twice-yearly World Economic Outlook this month predicted a pick-up in global growth from 3.0 percent last year to 3.2 percent in 2003, with activity ramping up in the second half of the year.

"I believe this remains the most likely development," Koehler said.

"But many risks and vulnerabilities in the world economy pre-date the war in Iraq and must be addressed if strong global growth is to be restored," he said.

Most importantly, Koehler said, the world must reduce its excessive dependence on the US economy to power growth, a tendency that had led to widening imbalances.

The IMF has pressed Europe to liberalize the labor market, making it less costly and less complicated for companies to hire and fire.

Japan is under pressure to halt a four-year slide in prices, unknown in the industrial world for the past 50 years, clean up bad loans in the banking system and revamp its companies.

But the United States also must set up a medium-term framework to eventually re-establish a balanced budget, the IMF chief said.

A US budget blueprint projects a record deficit of $385 billion in the fiscal year starting October 1, and a $1.4-trillion deficit over 10 years.

President George W. Bush has proposed a massive $726-billion tax cut and economic stimulus. But lawmakers are determined to pare the tax cut because of deficit fears. *AFP*

Euro hits fresh 4-year high

TOKYO—The euro hit fresh four-year highs against the dollar and the yen on Wednesday on a steady flow of funds into the single currency as investors continued to seek higher yields, dealers said.

The market's appetite for the euro increased as the dollar failed to maintain gains despite a surge in US consumer confidence in April shown by data released on Tuesday.

The euro rose to $1.1135 its highest since February 1999, and hit 133.20 yen its highest since March 1999, dealers said.

"We really can't explain the present bullishness of the euro by looking at fundamentals because there are many weak signs in the euro-zone economies too," said a senior dealer at a major Japanese bank.

"But there is a strong momentum to buy euros, while investors are apparently shifting out of the dollar by focusing on dollar-selling factors."

The dealer said that along with Japanese investors flocking to the euro, investors from Asia and the Middle East were rumored to be bidding actively.

But the single currency drifted down on the yen, as the greenback was pressured by major stop-loss selling triggered around 119.50 yen.

The euro was quoted at 132.75/78 yen against 132.68/80 yen in late New York.

The dollar stood at 119.26/31 yen from New York's close of 119.76/84. It hit a session high of 119.97.

Sentiment for the dollar weakened after the greenback dropped sharply from the recent highs despite a monthly gauge from the US Conference Board which showed that US consumers found comfort in the end of the Iraq war.

"The euro remains strong, and it reaped more support because the dollar stayed under pressure. I was a bit shocked to see that the dollar slumped despite strong consumer confidence data," said Hideaki Furumaya, head of the interbank desk at Trust and Custody Services Bank.

"It seems that the dollar could come under further downward pressure. The market now tends to react more sensitively to dollar-selling factors," he said. *Reuters*

A MAN stops his bicycle to look at share prices in Tokyo. Tokyo stocks rose early Wednesday as investors who returned to trading from a Japanese national holiday tried to catch up with US stock gains. The Nikkei Stock Average of 225 selected issues was up 87.05 points, or 1.14 percent, at 7,694.93 shortly after the open. AP

SARS epidemic to hit Asian banks—Moody's

SINGAPORE—The SARS epidemic is likely to have only a transient impact on the banking systems of Greater China and Singapore unless the situation deteriorates sharply, Moody's Investors Service said Wednesday.

The global credit rating watchdog said bank liquidity will rise with consumption falling, while profitability and asset quality are expected to deteriorate. The US economic recovery will also be crucial in how banks fare in SARS-affected Asian economies.

Moody's said the ratings outlook for banks in Greater China—the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan—as well as Singapore remained stable.

"However, concerns about potentially deeper impacts on the banks will increase, should the illness continue to spread and its presence prove protracted," it said in a statement.

"At the same time, SARS is likely to materially impact the region's economies, as evidenced by the already significant disruptions to business and investment," said Wei S. Yen, the author of the report and a Moody's vice president and senior credit officer.

The latest Moody's assessment came in a statement on the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis, which has left more than 350 dead out of 5,400 cases in nearly 30 countries and territories.

The most badly affected are China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada.

Moody's said that in Greater China and Singapore, bank profitability and asset quality are expected to deteriorate in the coming months to varying degrees as a result of SARS.

Liquidity should rise due to the uncertainties the illness is generating and the resulting fall in consumption.

Global economic conditions, in particular, the US recovery, will also play a crucial role in Asia's heavily export-reliant economies. *AFP*

BOJ eases monetary policy, cites economy

TOKYO—The Bank of Japan eased its monetary policy in a surprise decision on Wednesday, citing uncertainty in the global economy and a worrying fall in Tokyo share prices to two-decade lows.

The central bank said it would raise the reserves target, the target amount for banks' current account deposits held at the central bank, to 22-27 trillion yen ($184-225 billion) from 17-22 trillion yen.

It also vowed to provide liquidity beyond the new amount if it was needed to ensure stability in financial markets. The decision by the nine-member board was unanimous.

"The stock market continues to be unstable, particularly banking shares, and we must be alert to risks of this having a negative impact on financial markets and the real economy," the BOJ said in a statement.

Economists said the easing could help soothe Japan's troubled markets, but played down the impact of the move on an economy that has remained stagnant despite a flood of funds under the BOJ's super-loose policy.

"I don't think this move would have any impact on the real economy as it mostly aims for an announcement effect," said Barclays economist Mamoru Yamazaki.

"But with stocks falling so much and renewed worries about a crisis of confidence in the financial sector, it does help to do away with some negative risks."

The BOJ said the Japanese economy was flat, but cited uncertainties over the European and US economies and said it was concerned about the impact of the SARS virus on the rest of the Asian region.

It also said it would start to accept proof of loans to the Industrial Revitalization Corp (IRC), a state-backed corporate rescue entity, as collateral for its own loans to banks.

The plan, widely reported by media beforehand but dismissed by most economists as unlikely to have much impact, is meant to encourage banks to lend more to companies by going through the IRC, removing much of the risk of lending directly.

Banks have been reluctant to lend even to healthy companies while they deal with their existing pile of bad loans.

BOJ Governor Toshihiko Fukui, who took office in March amid heavy government pressure to do more to help the economy, has said one of the key tasks is getting banks lending again. *Reuters*

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Lecture:
Dr. Josie O. Santamaria,
President, Career Systems, Inc.

May 28, 2003 (Wednesday)

Keeping High Flyers in the Company
Lecture:
Ms. Thelma Geraldine A. Baricaua,
Sr. Consultant,
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Lecture:
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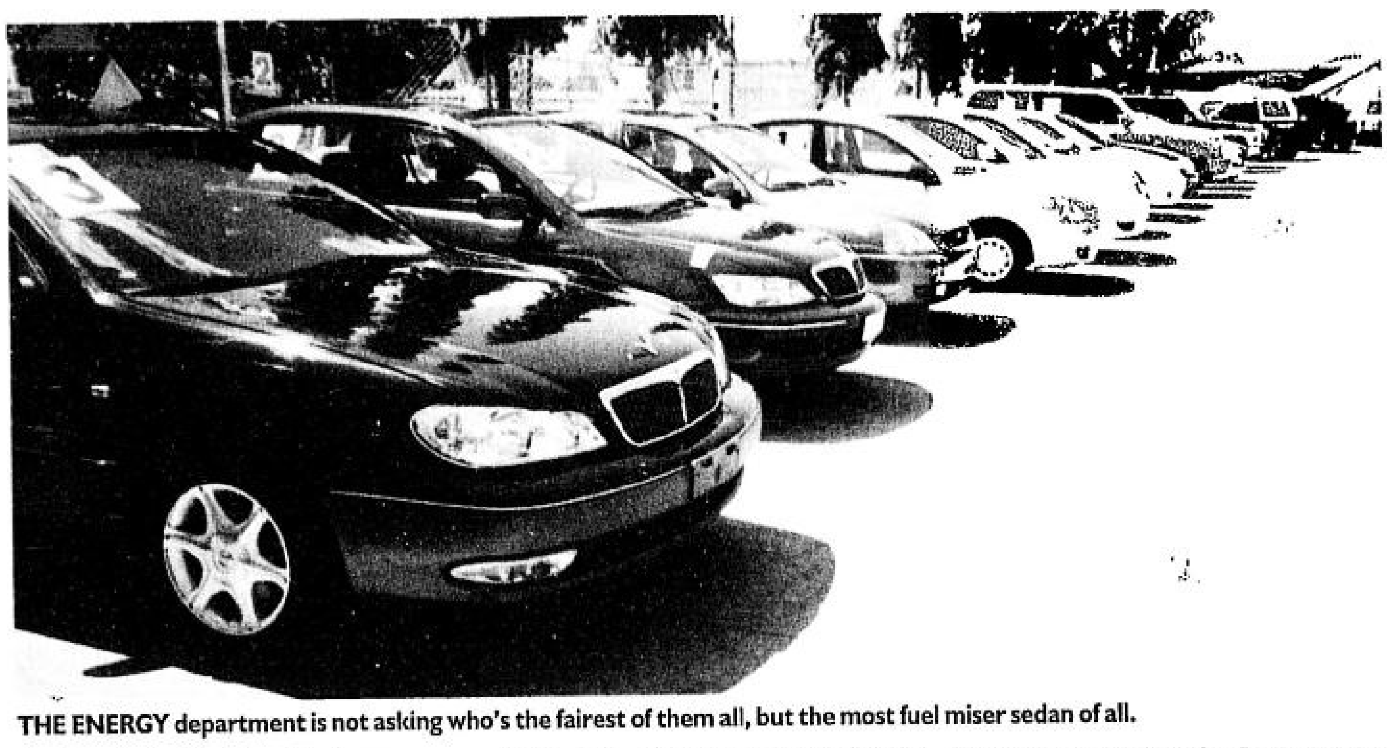
MOTORING

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

Fuel-economy run results puzzle engineers

High-tech Prius loses over regular Toyota sedan

By Tessa R. Salazar



THE ENERGY department is not asking who's the fairest of them all, but the most fuel miser sedan of all.

AUTOMOTIVE engineers and technicians were scratching their heads in disbelief.

A 1.6-liter Altis defeated the 1.5-liter hybrid Prius in a sedan fuel-efficiency run, the result of which automotive engineers and even Toyota people found unbelievable and defying every form of logic.

The Altis in question yielded a fuel mileage of 27.3 km per liter, while the Prius showed a fuel-efficiency run of 21.3 km/l. The energy department's Toyota Prius, meanwhile, clocked in 23.8 km/liter.

Reverse engineering

The Prius' technical achievements are some of the most advanced on the road today, though it's not yet available in the Philippines. The Prius is considered one of the most fuel-efficient hybrid cars. A highly efficient combustion engine in combination with an advanced electric motor losing to a 1.6-liter Altis—though also equipped with a VVT-I engine—seemed to be a "classic case of reverse engineering," noted engineers present during the event.

The Prius boasts of the Toyota hybrid system, which, according to Toyota engineering, combines a highly efficient VVT-I gas engine with an advanced electric motor to not only power the Prius, but also recharge the vehicle's batteries via a clever generator and regenerative braking system (no plugging for recharging). The Prius' advanced control system monitors each system component to maximize fuel efficiency and minimize pollution.

Today, however, pitted against the Altis, the Prius looked like a has-been.

"Prius looked lousy compared to Altis from the engineering standpoint. That's why engineers were calling it reverse engineering—like saying Prius should learn more from the Altis instead of the other way around," said automotive technologist Alex Loinaz, Filcar Inc. president.

Intense scrutiny

Toyota technicians claimed the only thing they did from the time of the dry run when the Altis showed 17 km/liter until the actual competition where it got 27 km/liter was to change the transmission from automatic to manual.

The Toyota Motors Philippines Inc.'s service department is currently investigating the Altis in question.

"The Altis, along with other vehicle units in the contest, underwent intense scrutiny the day before to preserve integrity of the contest and the units," said Ariel de Jesus, Toyota Philippines' spokesperson.

"We were happy with the fuel efficiency yielded by the Altis but we are still evaluating the result (of the Altis)," he said.

The Altis, relatively new as it has a registered 3,000-km mileage, is a service vehicle of Toyota's service manager.

Fuel-economy run

The Department of Energy's first fuel-economy run for passenger cars held on April 27 featured 11 cars, two SUVs and more than a dozen support vehicles running the 160-km route from Fort Bonifacio in Taguig to Lipa City, Batangas at a maximum speed of 80 kph.

The other vehicles were reported to have fitted their own modifications, mostly in the tire dimensions, though the manufacturers insisted they have maintained their original stock tires. Nissan Motor Philippines' Raymond Tribdino stressed that his Nissan Cefiro Brougham and Nissan GSX maintained their original stock tires.

The fuel-economy convoy, nearly two kilometers long, followed the 3-second distance from one another. Participating cars were not allowed to overtake each other since the run was not a racing competition.

The DOE intends to gather data on the fuel-economy rating of the participating passenger cars in safe and normal driving conditions, employing energy-efficiency measures and techniques in driving.

The run started at 4 a.m. and ended at 7:20 a.m. The route covered DOE in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, to the South Luzon Expressway, Star Tollway to Lipa City, and back to the Edsa Shell gasoline station, then the Global City, Fort Bonifacio, for the end of the run.

Aside from the Toyota Corolla Altis (1,598 cc) manual transmission and the Toyota Prius (1,497 cc) automatic transmission, other participating sedans were: Kia Rio RS Sedan (1,343 cc) manual, Honda Civic Vti (1,600 cc) manual, Nissan Cefiro VIP Brougham (1,995 cc) automatic;

Volvo S40 (1,948 cc) automatic; Kia Rio LS HB (1,493 cc) manual; Mitsubishi Lancer GLS (1,584 cc) manual; Nissan Sentra GX (1,300 cc) manual; Volvo S60 (1,984 cc) automatic; Toyota DOE Prius (1,497 cc); Nissan Safari (4,300 cc) and Toyota Land Cruiser (4,300 cc) manual.

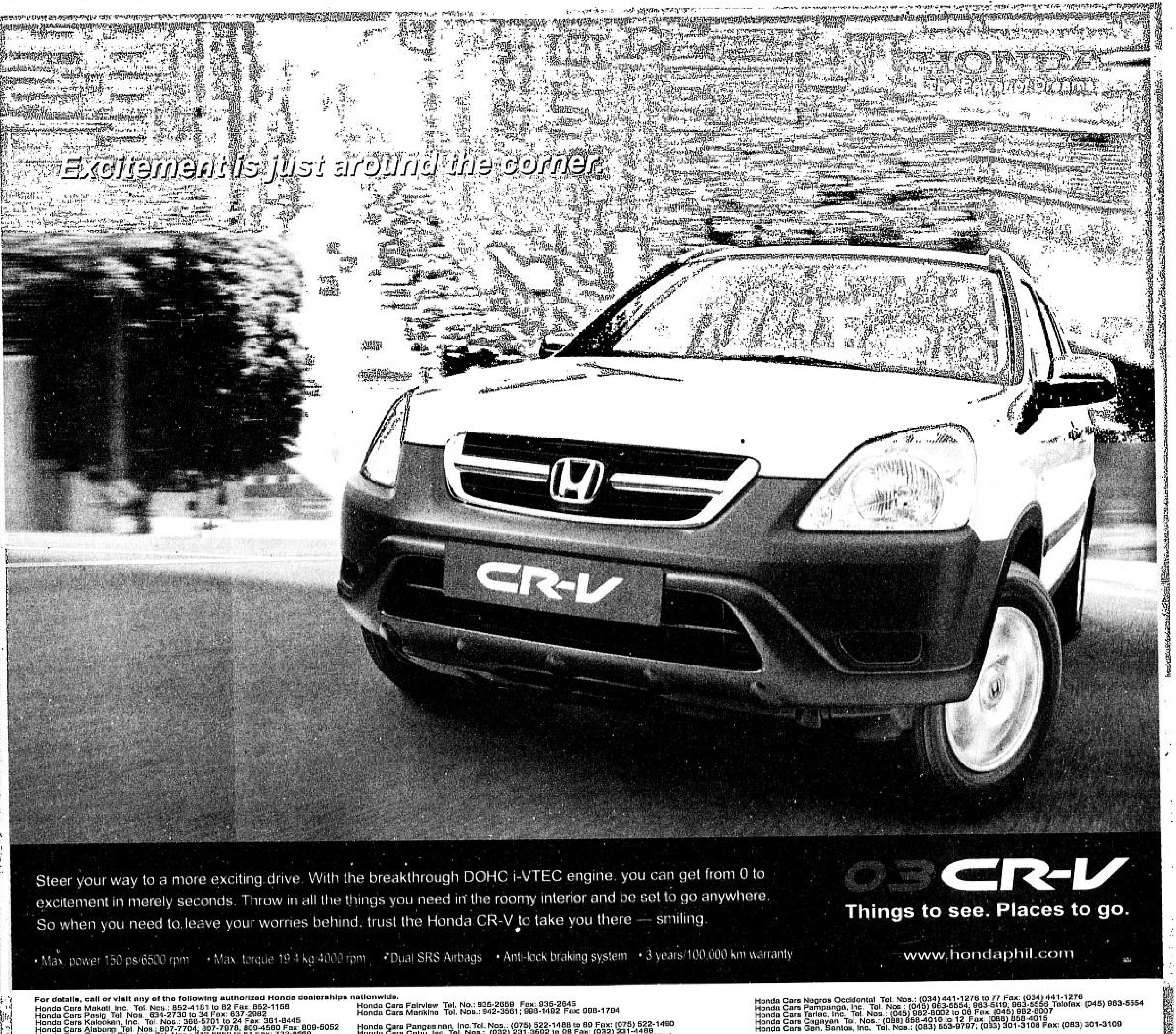
"We want to become a factor in a purchasing decision: fuel efficiency," said Energy Secretary Vince Perez. Perez also said the DOE intends to create awareness for motorists and for manufacturers that they should produce fuel-efficient cars and create friendly competition.

Fuel efficiency

Asked to comment on the results, he told the INQUIRER to look at the median of the results.

Said Perez: "We're trying to educate the consumers. This is really very close to it. If you want to educate the consumers, it should be some things they're not yet aware of. Fuel efficiency of cars is something that has not been commonly reported."

Perez and the organizers resolved to use flow meters to measure fuel more accurately in the next fuel-economy run.



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Checking for roadworthiness without the road test

Text and photos by Tessa R. Salazar

A MOBILE data carrier is changing the way cars, or any vehicle for that matter, are diagnosed and inspected.

Because without actually road testing the vehicle, you can efficiently test exhaust emissions, side slip, suspension, steering, axle parts, rattle noise, brake, brake fluid, tire, speedometer, chassis, headlight and emission.

This diagnostic test called Micropen 2000 has a software package, a bar-code checklist and a mobile data carrier all in one.

The system requires one computer, one printer and the Micropen for the interface to your test units. The Micropen yields high operational benefits from the system.

Easy to handle and operate, claims its local carrier Mancor Industries Inc. (www.mancor.com.ph), it is like using pencil and paper, except that this test is quicker, reliable, updated and accurate.

Its 60-gram weight and pen shape can easily be contained in one's pocket and stores up to 64KB of data. The interface is for data transmitting and internal battery charging so it lets one work all day without a recharge.

The memory is cleared after data transmission to one's computer and ready to use for the next vehicle. Should you have more than one computer, the software can also accommodate your network. Integrated safety features include certain data that can only be accessed through codes.

MINUS road testing, the brakes, suspension, speedometer and tires are checked and analyzed to aim for a zero-defect on services.

The motor vehicle inspection system includes testing the exhaust emission if it meets the government-set standard; the side slip, which has an indicator of lateral forces being extended on the tires at the road surface (toe-in, toe-out). The most severe tire wear conditions are caused by these forces.

Checking suspension includes checking the wheel to ground contact. It is important to have a better grip on the road. This plays a major role in the vehicle's safety. The tester will read the shock absorber and the suspension parts.

The rattle noise analyzer locates the origin of the rattle noise as it is an indication of a defect. The brake test includes checking if the front-to-rear balance, the left-to-right balance and parking brake function properly.

It also has a tire analyzer, a confirmation if the speedometer of the vehicle is properly calibrated.

It also has a chassis analyzer to check if the vehicle has been in an accident. An impact may cause the vehicle to stay away from the centerline and cause "dog tracking" or when the body is not aligned with the chassis. This affects the life and performance of the wheels, suspension parts, tires.

It also has a play detector to check the condition of suspension, steering and axle parts; a headlight tester and an emission extractor.

AUTO EXTREME AUTO BYTES

Catch AUTO EXTREME every Saturday, 4 PM on RPN 9 and log on to www.autoextreme.tv

Each week, a viewer's question related to cars and motoring gets answered on Auto Extreme. You can get a hard copy every Thursday in the Motoring section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

I WOULD like to lower my car but I'm on a tight budget. Does cutting stock springs affect the performance of my car's suspension?

—Evans G. Nolasco of Las Piñas City

For the majority of performance enthusiasts, using shorter springs is perhaps the only viable way to lower a car.

Some experts say it is possible to cut the original springs of most cars to gain a 2-inch drop.

Beyond 2 inches, you begin to run into suspension and alignment problems. When you shorten springs, you get a twofold effect. First, you lower the vehicle's center of gravity—which is good for handling; and you stiffen up or increase the spring rate—which is also good for handling. As soon as you cut a spring, you not only lower the car, you also increase the spring rate as it takes out some of the compressibility of the spring.

Spring rate is expressed in pounds per inch (lb/in.). For example, if your car has a 320-lb/in. spring, that means adding a 320-pound weight to the top of the spring would compress it exactly 1 inch. But remember, the amount the spring is cut is multiplied by a certain ratio when it's installed in the car. So that cutting a spring by 1 inch could already mean dropping the ride height between 1.5 and 2 inches for your front suspension.

The primary disadvantage of using shorter springs to lower a car is that the suspension travel is reduced. Travel is defined as the distance between the bump stop and the top of the strut housing—but what that simply translates to is that longer travel suspensions do a better job of making a rough road seem smooth. Lowering by more than 2 inches also creates more than just ground-clearance difficulties. As you lower the front suspension, the top of the tire tilts outward, gaining positive camber at an increasing rate.

What car buyers want

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

EVERY so often, I get e-mails from readers seeking advice on what passenger car, sport utility vehicle (SUV), pickup truck or minivan to buy.

My standard answer to such inquiries is that journalistic ethics don't allow me to recommend or endorse one product over another. Besides, even though I may have test-driven the motor vehicle in question, it would have been for a limited time only, ranging from a weekend to five or six days, so my evaluation thereof is also limited. The longest test-drive I ever had was during the last Christmas holidays, when an Isuzu Trooper Skyroof was with me for two weeks. In this Third World, SARS-afflicted country, there is no such thing as a long-term test drive lasting a year or more for motoring journalists, unlike in the United States.

Aside from this, I cannot advise readers what car to buy because I don't know them and their financial resources. When you go shopping for a new car, you have to take into account not only the acquisition cost, but also how much operating the car, maintaining it in good condition, insuring it and renewing its registration every year will cost. So the fluctuating price of petroleum, periodic check-ups and servicing, insurance premiums, spare parts, the annual LTO registration fee plus a new set of tires and a new battery every two or three years have to be factored in.

Age and lifestyle

This does not include the possibility of the car getting stolen or figuring in an accident, the cost of repair, settling damage claims and so on—especially if your car is not covered by comprehensive (including anti-theft) insurance because you did not want to pay the hefty insurance premium.

The age and lifestyle of the buyer have to be taken into consideration, too. Is the buyer a college student, a debutante, a yuppie, newly married, a matron, middle-aged, an employee, an entrepreneur, a gentleman farmer or a retiree? (Executives are excluded because they are usually assigned a company car.) Will the car be his/her first car, the only car in the family, a second car or one of many? Will it be owner-driven or driven by a chauffeur? Will it be used for long, out-of-town trips or within the city only? What are the ages and physical condition of the persons who will be regularly riding it? (For example, if a baby and/or toddlers will be frequent passengers, forget leather seats.)

This reminds me of a married couple, whom I have known for many years and who recently sought my advice on what car to buy to replace their 10-year-old station wagon. This couple, who are elderly and well-off, wanted a vehicle that would take eight people, representing four generations of the family, around town in comfort. But since the station wagon they had was no longer in production, they were in a quandary.

Not a minivan or SUV

First of all, they did not want to buy a minivan because they already had a big one. Nor did they want an SUV, since they had a diesel SUV that was also 10 years old but still in excellent running condition. They also had a medium-sized 2.0-liter passenger sedan and a pickup truck.

The most logical choice was the Chevrolet (actually Opel) Zafira, but this has been out of stock for some time now like the Volkswagen Caravelle and Opel Omega wagon. The wife liked the Subaru Forester for its low ground clearance, but the Forester, like the Opel Astra Club Wagon and Toyota RAV4, seats only five. The Honda CR-V, which is touted to seat 10, was considered for a while but was eventually dropped because the wife found it too high and difficult to climb into. What more a 90-year-old aunt who would be caroming around town with them regularly?

Since Asian utility vehicles were out of the question, they had no choice but to look at SUVs. The husband liked the new Nissan Patrol and the Mitsubishi Pajero but the wife thought they were too big. They were about to settle on an Isuzu Trooper, although it was too tall for the husband's office parking space, when the married son pointed out that they already had an SUV and recommended instead the Toyota Camry or Nissan Cefiro, either of which, he said, would befit his parents' status in life.

Last I heard, my friends ended up buying none of the above. They simply had the engine of their station wagon overhauled and use their old SUV and minivan more often. This may have been a wise decision because of the pending revision of the excise tax and resulting influx of new cars—including, perhaps, a nice new eight-seater station wagon.

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Every calendar's days are numbered.

How best to bust faking of vehicle insurance cover?

By Vicente B. Foz
Contributor

HOW best to fight the issuance of fake, spurious or unauthorized certificates of insurance coverage plaguing the Land Transportation Office for decades?

It's now a choice between the Insurance & Surety Association of the Philippines (Isap) and the Stradcom Corp., the developer-operator of the LTO Information Technology system with their differing approaches or systems.

Reliability

At stake is the reliability of the LTO process of authenticating or checking certificates of insurance coverage for compulsory third party liability (CTPL). Before a car or other motor vehicle is registered with the LTO, the CTPL insurance certificate must first be issued.

Confirming the figures of the Insurance Commission and the LTO, the Isap said three out of four such car insurance papers are fake or unauthorized. For fake insurance certificates defraud the government of millions of pesos of much-needed revenues and the legitimate insurance companies of premiums legally due them. And worse, innocent motor vehicle owners are robbed of the insurance protection they pay for.

Fully automated system

Last year, the LTO and the Insurance Commission agreed with the Isap to establish a fully automated—no unofficial human intervention—system of registration and verification of the insurance coverage. Such system should be integrated with the existing computerized workflow of the LTO and its offices nationwide to allow an online and real time validation of the authenticated insurance certificates.

Dismal failure

Isap contracted SQL Wizard and D:Tech to handle the job. However, after sometime, the LTO, citing complaints from its regional offices, found out that the Isap system, through its contractors, has not been working according to expectations. The system is not fully automated and involves manual or human intervention since the certificates of insurance coverage are only authenticated and verified by manually putting a sticker on them. The LTO called this unacceptable, a "dismal failure."

Reports from the LTO offices showed the Isap system is only being partially carried out. Up to now, Isap has not complied with the LTO-IC joint directive to integrate its authentication and validation process with the existing LTO-IT system. This makes for longer waiting time and queues than necessary, without assuring that insurance certificates are truly genuine and unique. Indeed, the Isap reported that from July 2002 to March 2003 it issued 1,698,700 authenticated insurance certificates but failed to mention that the number of motor vehicles registered during the same period totaled 2,851,782. This shows that the Isap system was not able to authenticate and verify 1,153,082 insurance certificates.

Enhancing the motor vehicle registration system of the LTO-IT project, Stradcom developed what it calls Certificate of Cover Authentication Facility or COC-AF. This IT facility provides a three-way match. It identifies and authenticates the insurance company or issuing agency that sells the certificate of insurance coverage, the uniqueness of the certificate and the motor vehicle record, and locks all this information into the motor vehicle registration system of the LTO-IT system.

The COC-AF allows the LTO evaluator processing motor vehicle registration to validate the authenticity of a particular insurance certificate online and in real time. It ensures the certificate is assigned only to one particular vehicle. It also removes the additional work step under the Isap system of verification where the LTO evaluator still has to check the sticker on the certificate. This cuts the customer's waiting time considerably, especially if the LTO evaluator suspects something amiss on the certificate.

The COC-AF fully complies with LTO's approved business process specifications and the requirements of the joint IC-LTO directive.

The LTO had earlier repeatedly invited Isap and its member-companies to a free two-week trial of the Stradcom system, but Isap turned down the invitation. A number of the Isap members, especially reputable insurance companies that have tested the Stradcom system, endorsed it for its integrated and seamless end-to-end solution.

At present, almost all members of the Philippine General Insurers Association Inc., comprising a substantial sector of the insurance industry, are testing the Stradcom facility and are obviously satisfied with the results.

Ultimate objective

Meanwhile, the Isap seems bent in its protest against Stradcom's COC-AF, while the LTO and the Insurance Commission appear unable to make up their collective mind. But they should focus on the ultimate objective of the entire exercise: to eliminate fake insurance certificates.

Their common lookout is for a system that can finally stop the issuance of fake insurance certificates—one that can ensure that the government gets its share of taxes, the insurance companies their premiums, and the vehicle owner the protection due it after paying for valid third-party insurance coverage. This should not make it difficult for the LTO and the IC to decide which system can really stop fake insurance certificates and should be adopted.

A day in the life of Quintin Balajadia

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

A GUY I know—let's call him Quintin Balajadia (QB)—got sick after renewing his driver's license last week. Reason: He walked back and forth to complete paper work, drug tests (through your urine) and a medical checkup. All three had to be accomplished/performed in three different places within an LTO (Land Transportation Office) compound somewhere in Metro Manila.

First things first.

QB went to the LTO offices at 7:30 a.m., thinking he'd be first in the queue. Found out he was late. He would be 19th in the queue.

* * *

The area was crawling with fixers (who said they were gone?).

While on the queue, QB was approached by fixers several times; he ignored their offer to help speed up the renewal of his license. The going rate for a fixer's job was P500 per applicant; the "desperate" would settle for P300.

Lucrative business, huh? You have four customers in a day at P500 each, you have P2,000? Nope. You get "only" about P700. The rest will be distributed to some people from the inside on the take.

* * *

After filling up the form indicating he was renewing his driver's license (this was about 8:40 a.m. already), QB was told to go to a nearby "office" for the drug tests; the "office" was actually like a trailer but was a comfortable place to be in though as it was air-conditioned. It was almost freezing cold inside.

What bothered QB though was the place was about a 3-minute walk away, and the sun has started to heat up. So, from hot to cold was the second phase of the day's stint at the LTO.

QB is a patient guy.

* * *

The lady at the drug tests room, not yet 30 QB swore, was in T-shirt and denims. Very ruggedly casual, indeed. After handing QB a white, plastic bottle the size of which can hold four spoonful of cough syrup, she told QB to enter what appeared like a toilet with just one for-male-only urinal in it. Where the toilet was is not more than seven paces away from where the lady sat, who was facing the toilet.

"Don't close the door once you get inside," barked the lady.

Although QB found that weird, he obliged. Uncomfortable with that, QB at first had difficulty urinating; he was not used to having a lady for company while on the pee; not with someone not his wife. And to think there's just the two of them at that time.

* * *

It didn't take 30 minutes to finish the drug test—or what appeared like one.

E
NSTPD
UMVRS

"Go to the provincial health office for your medical checkup and then come back here to get your drug test results," said the lady right after receiving the bottle of QB's urine sample.

The place where QB was to go to next was a little farther; it was a 7-minute walk under the sun now starting to go ablaze. He was still 19th on the queue.

* * *

The door of the two doctors (men?) administering the medical checkup had a sign: The doctor is OUT. On top of the sign read: Provincial Health Office.

One man sat behind a desk; he was wearing a printed polo shirt, not yet 50 maybe. Another was seated in front of his fellow doctor—if he was a doctor at all; his right hand was holding what appeared like a baton's stick.

A vacant chair was in front of the doctor with a stick, but neither one of them bothered to offer QB a seat.

* * *

"OK, cover your one eye with this (a worn-out piece of dirt-laden cardboard measuring maybe 2"x2") and then read the smallest letters on that board," said the doctor (man?) with the stick, pointing to QB a pasted cardboard with big and small letters on it.

Halfway to the chore, the man with the stick stopped QB.

"You need to go to our eye doctor," said the man without a stick. "You just failed the eye test. You need to wear eyeglasses."

QB tried to argue his case.

"My left eye (which he used to read the letters) is near-sighted and my right eye is far-sighted," he said. "I own several eyeglasses already."

"Show me one," said the man without a stick.

"In my hurry, I left all of them at home," QB said.

"That's your problem," came the reply. "You produce one before we could proceed with the tests."

* * *

QB went out of the room, rather feeling dejected. He hated going home to get one of his eyeglasses because home is quite far from there. So, he appealed his case—with a bright idea up his sleeves. He would tell the "doctors" his secret.

"I am actually a reporter, so please ..." QB, brandishing both his National Press Club and office's IDs, was quickly cut by the man behind the desk.

"Why didn't you tell us from the very start, sir," he said, now acting as meek as a lamb. "No problem, sir. Here's your clearance."

* * *

To cut the long story short, QB, after emerging from the doctors' offices, got his new license about an hour later. He had paid P300 for the urine test, P50 for the medical checkup that included the eye test and BP check (his blood pressure was not taken) and P240 for change of address and two photo shots for a total of P590.

Before noon, QB was driving his car with his new license in his pocket, which is good for three years. When he got home, he told his wife: "It was hell out there. Hot, cold, hot, cold. But it was still a happy ending. I saved myself P500. Ah, those fixers."

At nightfall, QB had a slight fever, was coughing and troubled by a runny nose. Felled no less by fatigue, both mental and physical.

* * *

Cheers to Honda for sweeping the raging sales battle in the commercial vehicle segment in the first quarter of the year. The Honda CR-V sold a whooping 3,967 units in that span to become the country's best-selling vehicle in the country. Here's a glass to Arnel D and his Angels (Min, TinTin and Dansel) for the new feather on their caps.

* * *

QUOTE ME. Not because it's hot that's why you need to check the water level of your radiator all the time. Wrong. Avoid touching that radiator cap even if the weather is in its hottest. A properly maintained vehicle will always have a sound radiator system; rely on your temperature gauge and not on old-fashioned methods.

This brawny SUV has soft spot for ladies

Text and photo
by Charles E. Buban

DESPITE Durango's compact body, it still feels big, especially if you're the one behind the wheel—which is a good thing if you're the type who likes the invincible feeling of driving something big, sturdy and intimidating.

WHAT'S not to like about this sport-utility vehicles (SUV)? With a mean stance that will certainly be no pushover on the road and a mighty 4.7-liter Magnum V8 engine, the Dodge Durango creates an image of invincibility and reliability.

Yet with all these masculine traits, will it be able to draw one more segment of buyers—the female motorists—out there?

"If you look around, it seems there are more men driving SUVs on the road. But we hope to change that with the Durango," said national marketing manager Porti Vencer of the Norkis Automotive Resources Corp., Durango's exclusive distributor here in the country.

He said the Durango can also be a woman's SUV. "It's unlike the others out there: it's compact, responsive and has controls that are easy to adapt. Women won't feel like driving a big truck."

Taming of the brute

To prove his point, Vencer was kind enough to lend this reporter a black SLT Durango last weekend.

I told him I will be going to Bolinao, a coastal town of Pangasinan known for its more than 42-kilometer barrier reef and scenic but yet to be commercialized beaches.

What thrilled him, however, was when I told him I will be with five of my friends—all women.

He clarified later it wasn't because I will be spending my vacation with these pretty women but that it will be a great time for the Durango to be rated by my women companions.

Women behind the wheels

So off we went to Barangay Patar in Bolinao—approximately 284 kilometers north of Manila via Camiling town of Tarlac.

I let my friends take turns driving the Durango so I can ask them later about their experience behind the wheels.

Even before alighting they find the Durango a thumbs up. What attracted them was its size: "It's bigger than most pickups but not as big as the full-size SUVs that can sometimes be too challenging to negotiate on small roads," they said.

Classified between a mid-size and a full-size SUV, the Durango has got more than enough interior room for us six passengers and several more of our luggage by offering three rows of seats.

What impressed my female companions more was its air-con, which effectively protected us from the sweltering summer heat of April.

OK for large groups

If you're going to be using the Durango to transport large groups (up to eight, but that's pushing the limit), you can rest assured that for a mid-size SUV, the Durango has got so much power—235 horsepower and 295 lb-ft of torque.

It can haul a great load and still have enough power to tow some more. No wonder it was rated among the highest performing SUVs on the road today.

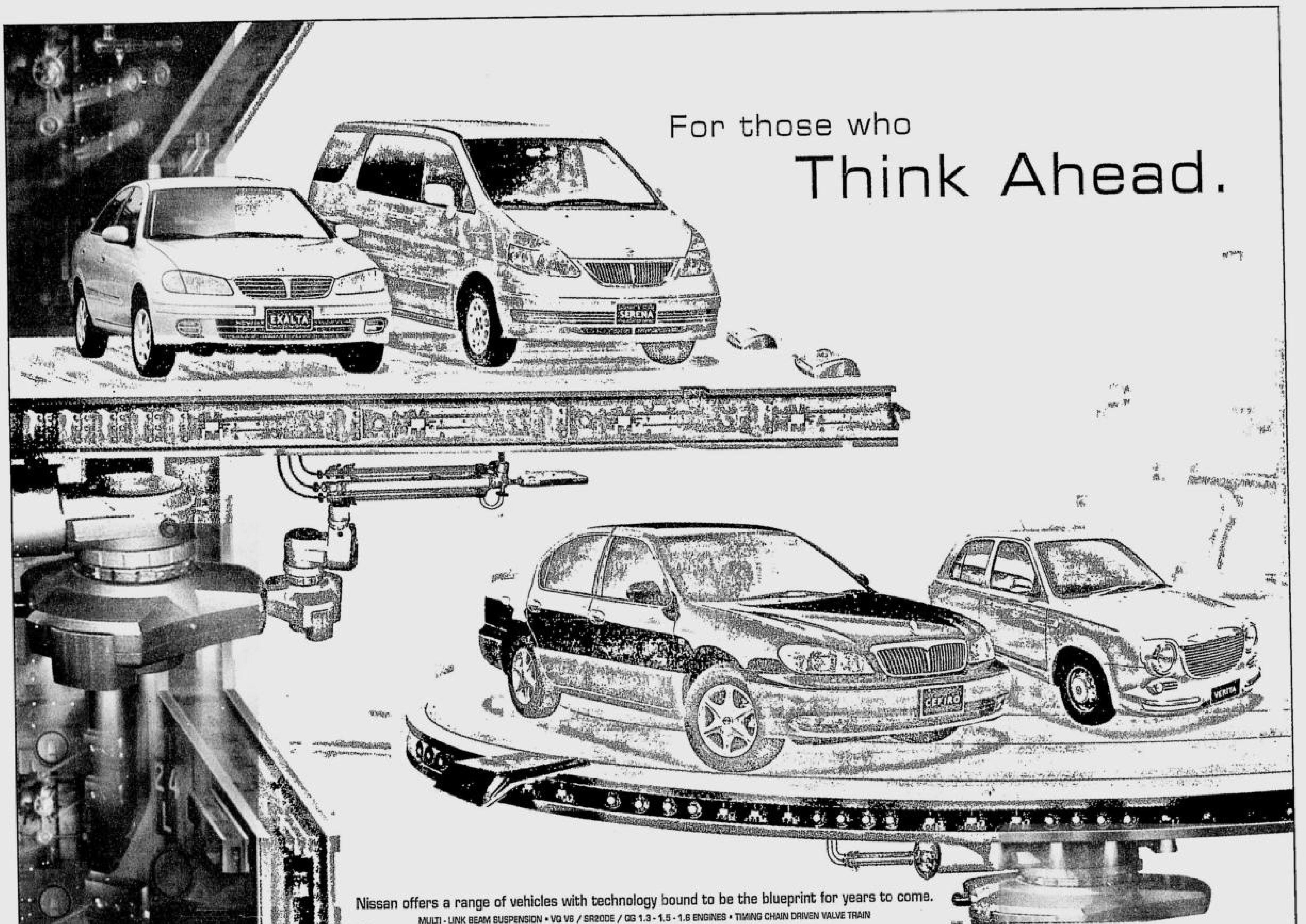
But Dodge Durango performance doesn't stop there. The full-time four-wheel-drive system offers an all-wheel-drive mode that provided us safety and convenience that comes with operating four-wheel-drive vehicles at all times.

Indeed, the Durango has loads of room and luxury features that will certainly top any woman's wish list. Said Vencer: "Durango is not only for the men—ladies would also find it rewarding to be in control of this powerful yet gentle machine."

Verdict: With its macho stance and unyielding powerplant, the Durango is undeniably one of the rugged-looking SUVs out there, though none of that is to suggest that women won't go for it, too.

SPECS

Vehicle class: Mid-size SUV
Model lineup: SLT 4-wheel drive
Engine: Magnum V8 SOHC, SMPI (single overhead camshaft, sequential multipoint fuel injection)
Displacement: 4,701 cc (4.701 liter)
Max output: 235 kW/4,800 rpm
Max torque: 295 N-m/3,200 rpm
Transmission: four-speed automatic transmission
Fuel consumption: averages 7 liter/km on our run
Price tag: P4.7 million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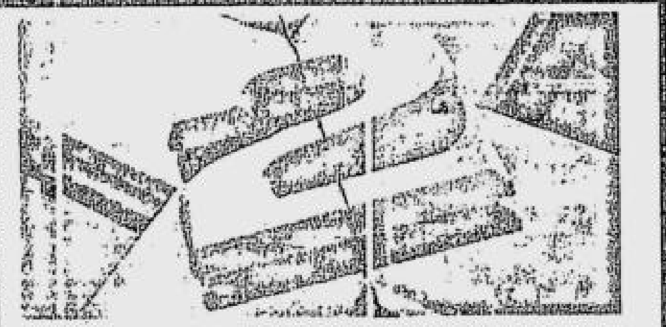

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2 X-MEN 2
3 JOHNNY ENGLISH
4 XEREX
5 TILL THERE WAS YOU
6 TILL THERE WAS YOU

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT
8294975

1 XEREX
2 X-MEN 2
3 TILL THERE WAS YOU
4 TILL THERE WAS YOU

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1 X-MEN 2
2 XEREX
3 TILL THERE WAS YOU
4 TILL THERE WAS YOU

SM CITY DAVAO
2976900

1 X-MEN 2
2 XEREX
3 TILL THERE WAS YOU
4 JOHNNY ENGLISH
5 TILL THERE WAS YOU
6 X-MEN 2

SM BICUTAN
776-3055

1 TILL THERE WAS YOU
2 TILL THERE WAS YOU
3 XEREX
4 X-MEN 2

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
859-2884

1 JOHNNY ENGLISH
2 TILL THERE WAS YOU
3 NATIONAL SECURITY
4 X-MEN 2

THE PODIUM CINEMA
18 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center Mandaluyong City
633-8976

1 ANGER MANAGEMENT
11:15 FS/11:45 MF/2:00/4:15/6:30/8:45/
10:35 LFS/11:00 LMF/12:50 END

2 X2: X-MEN UNITED
11:10 FS/11:40 MF/2:30/5:20/8:10/
10:30 LFS/11:00 LMF/1:20 END

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THX X-MEN2 12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 9:00 LMF, 11:20 END
2 X-MEN2
3 JOHNNY ENGLISH
4 XEREX
5 TILL THERE WAS YOU
6 X-MEN2
7 EQUILIBRIUM
8 ANGER MANAGEMENT
9 A MAN APART
10 WHAT A GIRL WANTS

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1 X-MEN 2
2 JOHNNY ENGLISH
3 XEREX
4 ANGER MANAGEMENT
5 X-MEN 2
6 TILL THERE WAS YOU
7 X-MEN 2

Metro East - Marcos hway
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1 ANGER MANAGEMENT
2 X-MEN 2
3 JOHNY ENGLISH
4 EQUILIBRIUM
5 PHONE BOOTH
6 XEREX
7 X-MEN 2
8 TILL THERE WAS YOU

Novaliches
935- 3229 - 30

1 X- MEN 2
2 A MAN APART
3 XEREX
4 JOHNY ENGLISH
5 X- MEN 2
6 ANGER MANAGEMENT
7 EQUILIBRIUM
8 TILL THERE WAS YOU

Malabon Citisquare
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1 TILL THERE WAS YOU
2 X- MEN 2
3 JOHNY ENGLISH
4 XEREX

Star Mills- Sn. Fernando, Pamp.
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(045)961-5270

1 SOLARIS
2 TILL THERE WAS YOU
3 WILLARD
4 XEREX
5 JOHNY ENGLISH
6 X-MEN2

Imus
471- 8188 / 875- 3838

1 X-MEN 2
2 XEREX
3 TILL THERE WAS YOU
4 A MAN APART
5 X-MEN 2
6 JOHNY ENGLISH

Sta. Rosa Laguna
(049)837-0907

1 XEREX
2 X- MEN 2
3 TIL THERE WAS YOU
4 JOHNNY ENGLISH
5 EQUILIBRIUM

Bacolod
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1 X-MEN 2
2 JOHNNY ENGLISH
3 TILL THERE WAS YOU
4 JUST MARRIED
5 X-MEN 2
6 SEX AND ZEN

Iloilo
336- 8077 - 78

1 X-MEN2
2 JOHNNY ENGLISH
3 TILL THERE WAS YOU
4 XEREX
5 SHADOW OF VAMPIRE
6 X-MEN 2

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Chalk model search

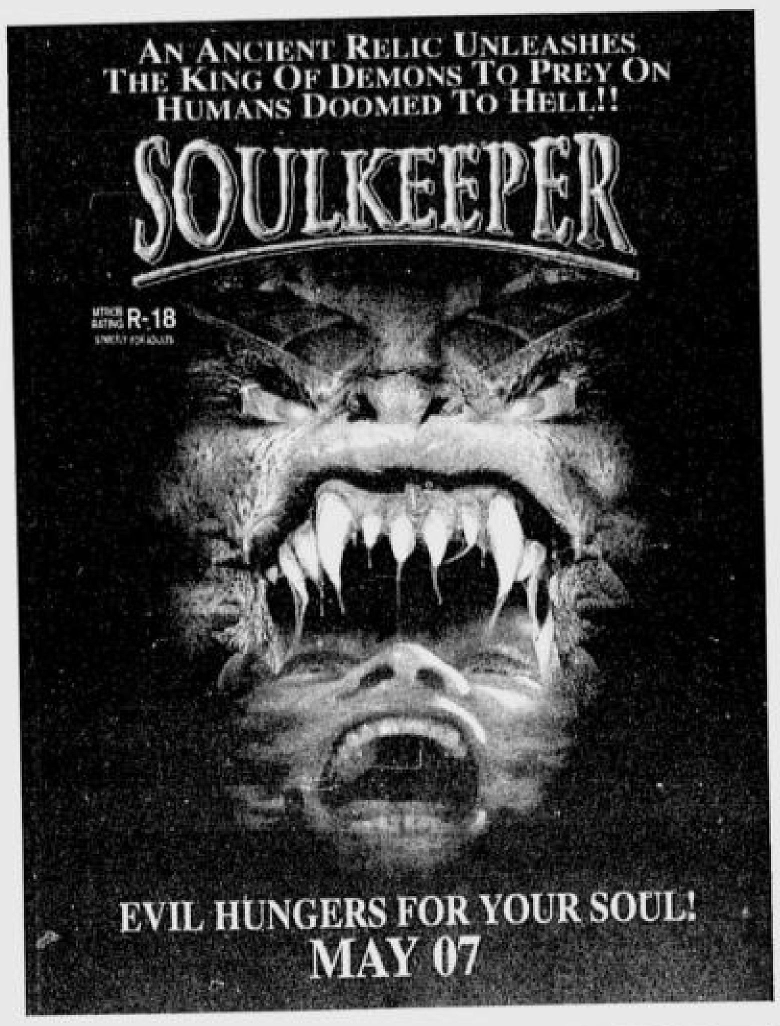
CHALK Magazine by ABS-CBN Publishing presents the finalists for the Eskinol and Master Campus Crush image model search.

Launched in November 2002, the search was held in over 50 colleges and universities around Metro Manila.

The finalists for Eskinol and Master Olympus Crush Search are Chantal Massab Faytaren of La Salle Zobel, Pamela Diane Gonzales of University of Santo Tomas, Elaine Bartolome of La Concordia College, Jasmin Chua of College of the Holy Spirit, Ginette Kristine Lemence of Assumption College, Gian Carlo Javellona of Access Computer Technical School, Jansen Torio of Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila and Joli Roa of National Institute of Information Technology.

The finalists were chosen by readers of Chalk magazine.

Winners will receive P50,000 and a product showcase by Sara Lee Phils. They will also get a contract with ABS-CBN Talent Center, plus a chance to do modeling stints for Chalk magazine. Winners will be announced on April 27.


AN ANCIENT RELIC UNLEASHES THE KING OF DEMONS TO PREY ON HUMANS DOOMED TO HELL!!
SOULKEEPER
MTRCB RATING R-18
EVIL HUNGERS FOR YOUR SOUL!
MAY 07

Admit it, it's you who needs a tune-up.
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Brush up on everything from car care tips to automotive launches and innovations.
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ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	PUNLA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	PUNLA
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	PUNLA
B	BOLD STAR
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	WHAT A GIRL WANTS
CINEMA-2	THE JUNGLE BOOK 2
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	TILL THERE WAS YOU
CINEMA-2	BOLD STAR
CINEMA-3	A MAN APART
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	X-MEN 2
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	X-MEN 2
CINEMA-6	TILL THERE WAS YOU
CINEMA-7	ANGER MANAGEMENT
CINEMA-8	PUNLA
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	X-MEN 2
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	X-MEN 2
CINEMA-11(SDDS)	JOHNNY ENGLISH
CINEMA-12	TILL THERE WAS YOU
CINEMA-14	TILL THERE WAS YOU
CINEMA-15	XEREX
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
CINEMA 1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA 2	BAHID
CINEMA 3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA 4	CHANGING LNES
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

MTRCB RATING PG-13
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HE KNOWS NO FEAR
HE KNOWS NO DANGER
HE KNOWS NOTHING
ROWAN ATKINSON
JOHNNY ENGLISH
VIVA
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MTRCB ► R-13 Strictly for 13 years of age and up

NICHOLSON
SANDLER
ANGER MANAGEMENT
FEEL THE LOVE
sony.com/AngerManagement
REVOLUTION STUDIOS

Adam Sandler, Jack Nicholson offer non-stop laughs in fun, new comedy

In the No. 1 comedy in America, Adam Sandler and Jack Nicholson star together for the first time as patient and therapist -- though at times it's hard to tell which one is which!

After a misunderstanding aboard an airplane, mild-mannered Dave Buznik (Sandler) is ordered to attend anger management sessions run by outrageous psychiatrist Dr. Buddy Rydell (Nicholson).

Tortured by Buddy's wacky and abrasive confrontational methods, Dave must decide whether to crawl back into his shell or stand up for himself, and keep his girl (Marisa Tomei) along the way.

With surprise appearances by top celebrities.

SECOND WEEK!

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For screening times, call 729-7777.

Check out all the cool X-men stuff at myGlobe X2 Exhibit Booths exclusively at Ayala Cinemas in Greenbelt 1, Greenbelt 3, Glorietta 4 and Alabang Town Center starting on April 25, 2003.

Catch this year's most awaited movie. Experience it best at Ayala Cinemas.

MTRCB Rating: Parental Guidance 13 (PG-13)

MTRCB RATING ► PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will be allowed in accompanied by a parent or adult.
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A Star Cinema 10th Year Anniversary Presentation

I have been waiting for so long. It was you all along.
Ronaldo Valdez Gina Pareño Pen Medina Marissa Delgado
Jennifer Sevilla Gerald Madrid Angel Jacob and Matet de Leon
Judy Ann Santos
Piolo Pascual
Till There Was You
Directed by: Bb. Joyce Bernal
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STAR CINEMA

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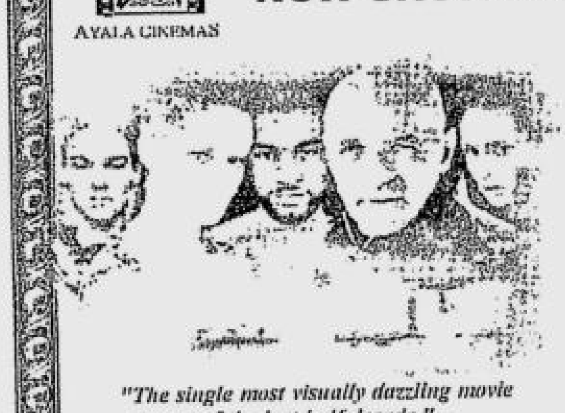
DARING, AWARD-WINNING, EXTRAORDINARY



"The single most visually dazzling movie of the last half-decade."
-- Kevin Thomas, LOS ANGELES TIMES

MTRCB Rating: Restricted 18 (R-18)

Love, revenge and power form a deadly struggle in this fierce Roman drama by Shakespeare.

TITUS

ANTHONY HOPKINS & JESSICA LANGE
Harry J. Lennix, Alan Cumming, Laura Fraser

In this epic tale of revenge based upon the play of William Shakespeare, Anthony Hopkins stars as Titus Andronicus, the Roman general who sows the seeds of vengeance when he executes the son of the enemy Queen, played by Jessica Lange. The repercussions of his action are revealed when the vindictive woman becomes the new wife of the Roman Emperor.

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Featuring
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& Karylle as Princess Sapphire
Directed by Audie Gemora

Ayala Center Makati
May 2 11am, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm
May 3 2pm, 4pm, 6pm
May 4 4pm, 6:30pm

Alabang Town Center
May 9 11am, 4pm, 6pm
May 10 11am, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm
May 11 4pm, 6:30pm

Ayala Center Cebu
May 23 4pm, 6:30pm
May 24 11am, 3pm, 5:30pm, 7pm
May 25 11:30am, 3pm, 6pm

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BLOOMS, ROOMS AND BUFFET

Mother's Day Specials at the Manila Peninsula

THE PENINSULA Manila salutes all fabulous moms the world over with a fabulous lineup of activities on Mother's Day this Sunday, May 11.

Make her blush with joy by surprising her with a myriad of beautiful blooms from The Peninsula Manila Flower Shop. Follow it up with a scrumptious Mother's Day Buffet at The Lobby for only P1,300++ for adults and P780++ for children (12 years and under) from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Diners will also enjoy Nielsen's where the chefs have whipped up a truly special Mom's Brunch Buffet that will have you going back for seconds and thirds and more. P1,100++ for adults and P660++ for children (12 years and under) from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Tell Mom she's sugar and spice and everything nice by getting her something delicious at Exclusivités. Mother's Day items, including specialty cakes, will be available from May 5 to 11. There are also breads and pastries, wines and spirits, cheeses and patés and assorted deli specials that are all you'll need to make her heart burst with motherly love.

For a truly memorable Mother's Day, gift her with a memorable Mom's Grand Weekend Package where she gets to stay at a Superior City View Room for only 4,500++ (overnight stay) or P7,500 ++ (for a three-night stay in one room or an overnight stay in three rooms). Mom's Grand Weekend Package is inclusive of buffet breakfast for two adults and children below 12 in Nielsen's and complimentary local calls. She also gets to enjoy any one of the following: one order of Pen Pals Ice Cream at the Lobby; two Clubhouse sandwiches and two ice teas by the pool; halo-halo at the Lobby for two persons and one box of pizza from Mi Piace. Valid on May 1 and all weekends of May (Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays).

So, come and spend Mother's Day at The Peninsula Manila and show mom how much you love her!

For more information, call The Peninsula Manila at 887-2888, ext. 2776/2276 for The Lobby, 2950/2951 for Nielsen's and 2100 for room reservations.

Mom's many choices at New World Renaissance Hotel

The bustling Coffee Shop offers a sumptuous lunch and dinner buffet of international dishes

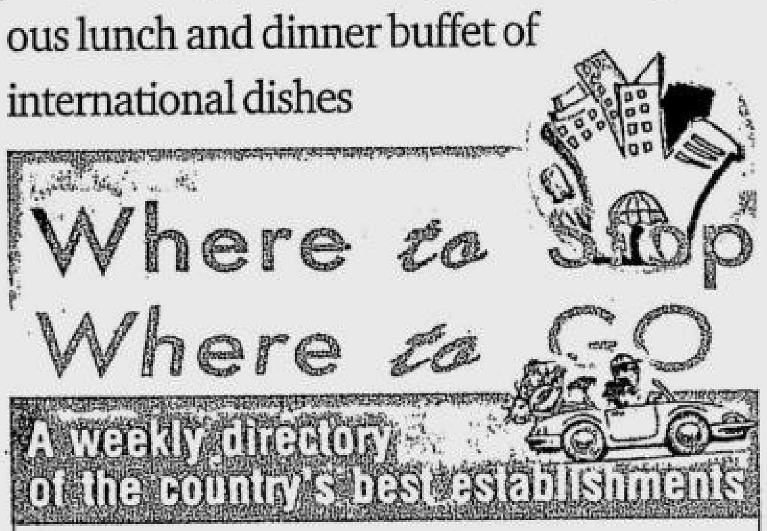
ON SUNDAY, May 11, take mom out for a Mother's Day treat at the New World Renaissance Hotel and give her a choice of different ways to celebrate, whether for lunch or dinner, in the deluxe hotel's various restaurants.

The bustling Coffee Shop offers a sumptuous lunch and dinner buffet of international dishes accentuated by three carvery items — Lechon, Prime Rib, and Roast Turkey at P890+. Bocarinos features a buffet of exquisite selections of the fine continental fare that it is known for, offered for lunch and dinner at P1,200++. For an oriental feast, Emperor Court is the perfect choice with its extensive buffet spread of well-loved Cantonese dishes that include: Suckling Pig, Peking Duck, and an assortment of dimsum, for lunch and dinner at P890+. Should mom prefer a casual lunch fete, a special buffet is set-up at the Lobby Lounge at P580+.

All moms will be surprised by a refreshing welcome drink upon entering the hotel lobby as well as a special memento for the occasion. All prices are subject to 10-percent service charge.

For more information and reservations, call 811-6888.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

New World Renaissance Hotel
Esperanza St. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City
Tel. 811-6888 / Fax. 811-6777

Makati Shangri-La Hotel
Ayala Ave. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City
Tel. 813-8888 / Fax. 813-5499

Dusit Hotel Nikko
Ayala Center, 1223 Makati City Phil.
Tel. 867-3333 Email: dusitmnl@dusit.com

Barcelo Hotels and Resorts
4/F Adamson Centre, 121 LP Leviste St,
Salcedo Village, Makati
Tel. (02) 867-1159 / Fax. (02) 867-1185

Mactan Island Resort
Punta Engaño Road, Lapu Lapu, Cebu
Tel. (632) 231-0288/Fax (632) 231-1688

Hotel InterContinental
1 Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Tel.815-9711

The Marco Polo
CM Recto St., Davao City 8000
Tel. (082) 221-0888/Fax (082) 225-0111

Hotel Veniz
No. 1 Abanao St., Baguio City
Tel. (074) 446-0700 / Fax. (074) 446-0704

City Travel Hotel
15 Kisad Road, Baguio City
Tel. (074) 445-0456/Fax (074) 445-0457

Skyrise Hotel
18 Dominican Road, Baguio city
Tel (074) 445-6834 to 36/Fax(074)443-3897

Hotel Supreme
113 Magsaysay Ave., Baguio City
Tel. (074) 443-2011 to 18 / Fax. (074) 442-2855

The Peninsula Manila Hotel
Cor. Ayala Ave. & Makati Ave., Makati City
Tel. 810-3456 / Fax. 815-4825

Mandarin Oriental Manila Hotel
Cor. Paseo de Roxas & Makati Ave.,
Makati City
Tel. 750-8888 / Fax. 817-2472

The Bellevue Manila
North Bridgeway, Northgate
Cyberzone,Filinvest Corporate City,
Alabang, Muntinlupa
Tel. (632) 771-8181/Fax(632) 771-8282

Waterfront Hotel Lahug
I Salinas Drive, Lahug Cebu City
Tel. (6332) 232-6888/Fax (6332) 232-6880

Waterfront Hotel Mactan
I Airport Road, Lapu Lapu City, 6015
Tel. (6332) 340-4888/Fax (6332) 340-5693

Royal Mandaya Hotel
J. Palma Gil St., Davao City
Tel. (082) 225-8888/Fax (082) 225-1888

Camp John Hay Manor
Loakan Road, Baguio City
Tel. (074) 446-0231 to 50/845-0892/845-0911
Fax. (074) 445-0420

Cooyeesan Hotel Plaza
Naguilian cor. Asin Road, Baguio City
Tel. (074) 447-8888 to 93/(074) 447-8895 to 98
Fax. (074) 447-0494

Golden Pine Hotel and Restaurant
Intersection of Cariño St. and
Legarda Road, Baguio City
Tel. (074) 444-9965 to 72/ 740-8975
/ Fax. (074) 446-0704

Taal Vista Hotel
Aguinaldo Highway, Tahaytay City
Tel. (046) 413- 1000 / Fax. (046) 413-1225

For feedback and inquiries, call
899-4426 or 897-8808 loc 209

Mandarin Oriental pampers the 'Queen of the Day'

MANDARIN Oriental, Manila delights moms of all ages, sizes and interests, with exquisite meals and special room packages in celebration of Mother's Day. On Sunday, May 11, treat the Queen of the Day to hearty meals in any of the hotel's highly rated restaurants.

Special Mother's Day buffets for brunch and dinner are available at The Brasserie and Tin Hau starting at P980++ for adults and P650++ for children ages 5 to 12 years old. On the same day, The Tivoli's award-winning culinary team proffers sublime gastronomic creations for Moms and company – for brunch, which offers a choice of main course with an appetizer and dessert buffet, is priced at P1,200++ for adults and P750++ for children ages 5 to 12 years old, while five-course dinner set menu is offered at P1,600++ for adults and P900++ for children ages 5 to 12 years old. At the Mandarin Deli, a three-course set menu is available at P650++ per person from May 4 to 11. A hamper of goodies, which might bring luster to Mom's eyes, makes for an ideal gift.. Choices range from P1,000 to P2,800. Surprise gift items from Dove, Ph Care and Biomedis await dining and room guest mothers on this commemorative day.

Or, pamper Mom with Mandarin Oriental's Mother's Spa Indulgence Package which includes an overnight stay and special discounts and privileges from The Oriental Spa. Room packages start at P3,300++ for a superior room inclusive of an International buffet breakfast for two at the Brasserie, one complimentary Spa Reliever massage, and a 20-percent discount on all treatments at The Oriental Spa. For an additional night, reduced charges for room rates apply starting at P2,900++ for a superior room.

The promo package is valid from May 1 to 31 and offered exclusively to Philippine residents only. For reservations, call 750-8888 extensions 2304 and 2305.

Waterfront Cebu: luxury caressed by homely comfort

THE MOMENT you step into the grand lobby lounge of Waterfront Cebu City Hotel in Lahug, you get drawn to its high fresco ceilings of the map of the old world. The feeling of luxury is to be savored, yet there is a comforting homely atmosphere exuded by the comfortable, plush handcrafted Cebu furniture stretching across the lobby space. Jomel Gonzaga, Waterfront's Marketing and PR officer explained, "We want the visitors to feel at home...That's a major priority to us."

Waterfront Cebu City Hotel has 562 well-appointed guestrooms, including two Presidential Suites, a Chairman's Suite, a Penthouse Suite, 14 Executive Suites, 23 Ambassador Suites and rooms for the disabled available upon request. Guests at the Waterfront are sure to enjoy convenient services available such as the laundry dry cleaning, baby-sitting and airport transfers by a private car or by Mercedes Benz limousines, health club for fitness buffs. Facilities available for guests to enjoy are the fitness gym, a beautiful swimming pool which is lit and heated in the evenings, and a spa to soothe the senses.

Adjacent to the hotel is the newly refurbished Cebu International Convention Center (CICC). With the renovation costing P50 million, Gonzaga adds that CICC, in addition to it's grand ballroom and multiple function rooms, now boasts of "state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and the Grand Atlantic Hall, the redesigned exhibition hall which at 3,100 square meters, is one of the largest in the country. " WCCH hosted past prestigious events such as the Asean Tourism Forum and the Philippine Advertising Congress.

Situated at the heart of the metropolis, Waterfront Lahug is proximal to the Ayala Center, bars and hangouts right across the hotel. For an evening of fun, guests can indulge at Casino Filipino located at the mezzanine.

For bookings or inquiries, call the Waterfront Manila Sales and Reservations Office at (02) 687-0888 or fax (02) 637-3897.

THE BEST SPANISH FOOD, WINE

The Barceló Pearl Farm Island Resort in cooperation with the Spanish Commercial Office (ICEX) recently showcased the best in Spanish food and wine at the resort located in the Island Garden City of Samal. Shown are (third from left) Melotte Mondelo, regional director of sales and marketing of Barceló Hotels and Resorts-Asia Pacific, Ambassador Ignacio Sagaz, Embassy of Spain, Sonia Garcia, DOT Regional Director, Sec. Richard Gordon, Department of Tourism, Mayor Antalan of Samal, Tony Brias, Honorary Consul of the Spanish Embassy for Davao, John Cogul, CEO of Barceló Hotels and Resorts-Asia Pacific, Usec. Oscar Palabyab, Tourism Services and Regional Office; and Xavi Jimeno, general manager of The Barceló Pearl Farm Island Resort. The month-long event titled "Flavors of Spain: Spanish Gourmet Food Products," will continue on May 15 at the Barceló Eagle Point Resort in Mabini, Batangas and at Taal Vista Hotel in Tagaytay City on May 23. For inquiries, call its Manila Office at (632) 867-1159 or visit www.barcelo-asia.com.

Oil slides again

NEW YORK—Oil prices fell to fresh five-month lows on Tuesday on expectations of rising spare supply in a weak global economy where the deadly SARS epidemic is biting into energy demand.

US light crude futures dropped 26 cents to $25.23 a barrel, coming within 20 cents of the lowest level in 11 months, after losing 20 percent in the past week. Brent crude in London fell 26 cents to $23.24 a barrel.

Prices have fallen for the last six sessions as the Opec cartel last week cut back less than expected of the extra crude it pumped to cover supply during the US-led war on Iraq.

While Opec presented its deal as a cut of 2 million barrels per day (bpd) analysts said its threshold for the reduction was inflated, reducing the actual impact of the move.

"The market is still living through the aftermath of the Opec meeting. It is surprised and disappointed with Opec's decision," Societe Generale analyst Frederic Laserre said.

Oil stocks in the United States, the world's largest consumer, have risen for two consecutive weeks. Analysts predict that new data will show they rose again last week.

Opec raised production well beyond formal quota limits in March to keep oil prices under control ahead of war in Iraq and make up for supply disruptions from a strike in Venezuela and strife in Nigeria. *Reuters*

FITCH REPORT

SARS could cut $30B from Asia

NEW YORK—Fallout from the spread of SARS may shave 1 percentage point, or roughly $30 billion, off Asia's growth this year, Fitch Ratings said on Tuesday, joining a growing chorus of grim outlooks for a region struggling to contain the deadly malady.

The flu-like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which has killed more than 350 people and infected 5,500 in nearly 30 countries, is hurting the economies of China, Hong Kong and Singapore and is pinching growth elsewhere in Asia, Fitch said in a report.

SARS is expected to exacerbate deflationary pressures and worsen public finances in Hong Kong and China, Fitch said, adding the crisis could have lasting effects on trade and investment flows.

The disease has also hit consumer spending as shoppers avoid shopping malls and restaurants where they could be exposed to the virus. In Hong Kong, Fitch said, reports showed retail trade fell 50 percent or more in mid-April, while anecdotal evidence suggested Beijing's retail and catering sector saw sales drop as much as 90 percent in late April.

"Putting numbers on the SARS effect is extremely difficult at this stage, but assuming it is another two to three months before the situation is brought under control, growth could be reduced by around 1-1/2 percent in Hong Kong, Singapore and China," said Fitch.

Fitch said China may now see growth of 5.8 percent in 2003, down from the red-hot pace of 7.3 percent the agency had been forecasting. Hong Kong may grow 1.5 percent, half the previous forecast of 3.1 percent, while Singapore's expansion is seen at 2 percent. Emerging Asia as a whole is seen growing 4.8 percent, Fitch added, from its earlier forecast of 5.8 percent.

Other forecasters have also cut their Asian economic outlooks because of SARS. The Asian Development Bank on Monday cut its growth forecast to 5.3 percent from the 5.6 percent pace it expected in December, citing SARS worries and an uncertain global recovery.

Citigroup slashed its forecast last week for China's 2003 expansion to 6.7 percent from 7.6 percent and shaved its outlook for Hong Kong by nearly a third to 1.0 percent from 2.8 percent. Singapore's growth is now seen at 2.4 percent, down from the bank's previous 3.5 percent.

J.P. Morgan Chase warned in a recent report that China's gigantic economy may actually shrink in the second quarter. The investment bank said it "penciled in" a contraction of 2 percent in the second quarter and it cut its 2003 forecast to 7.4 percent.

Fitch warned of even grimmer economic consequences if SARS is not controlled and countries and organizations begin to tighten restrictions on the movement of people and goods.

"Were this to happen, the impacts could be devastating for trade hubs such as Singapore and Hong Kong," said Fitch. *Reuters*

Ericsson reports more losses, cuts

STOCKHOLM—Telecommunications company Ericsson said Tuesday it was still losing money after two years in the red but the one-time flagship of Swedish industry promised profits in 2004, by slashing another 7,000 jobs.

The group announced its eighth consecutive quarterly net loss, of 4.31 billion kronor (471 million euros, $518 million), but said it planned to reduce its workforce to 47,000 by 2004 in a bid to bounce back into the black.

Ericsson, founded in 1876 by Lars Magnus Ericsson as a two-man workshop repairing telegraph instruments, has become one of the largest players in the highly advanced world of telephone technology.

Long the pride—and engine—of Swedish industry, the company shot to worldwide prominence during the high-tech bubble, as its profits, share price and image as a cool and cutting-edge group hit an all-time high.

But tough times have since befallen the entire telecom sector, and Ericsson is no exception.

The latest round of job cuts means the company will have nearly halved its workforce since the start of 2002, when it had 85,000 employees, while its share price has fallen from a high of 230 kronor in 2000 to junk bond status.

Ericsson insisted however that its future was rosy. *AFP*

Lufthansa cuts Asian flights, grounds planes

FRANKFURT—Lufthansa said on Tuesday it was grounding 15 more planes as the deadly SARS virus pounded demand to Asia and the recent war in Iraq and a weak economy exacerbated the worst crisis the industry has seen.

The airline said it expected revenues in April to decline by roughly 20 percent over the same month the previous year in the passenger business alone.

Europe's third largest airline by passengers said demand on Asian routes had collapsed by as much as 85 percent due to the deadly SARS virus. The airline said it was trimming its flights to Hong Kong to three per week from 13.

Chief Executive Juergen Weber said in a statement that even more measures were needed to cut costs as Lufthansa and other airlines battle the three factors of war, deadly disease and the economy, which are all knocking the industry.

Lufthansa shares gave up earlier strong gains to rise 1.23 percent to 9.07 euros, while the blue-chip DAX fell 0.69 percent.

Lufthansa has now grounded 70 planes along with its regional partners.

The airline warned earlier in April of an "unexpectedly" deep first quarter operating loss due to a sharp fall in passenger traffic. *Reuters*

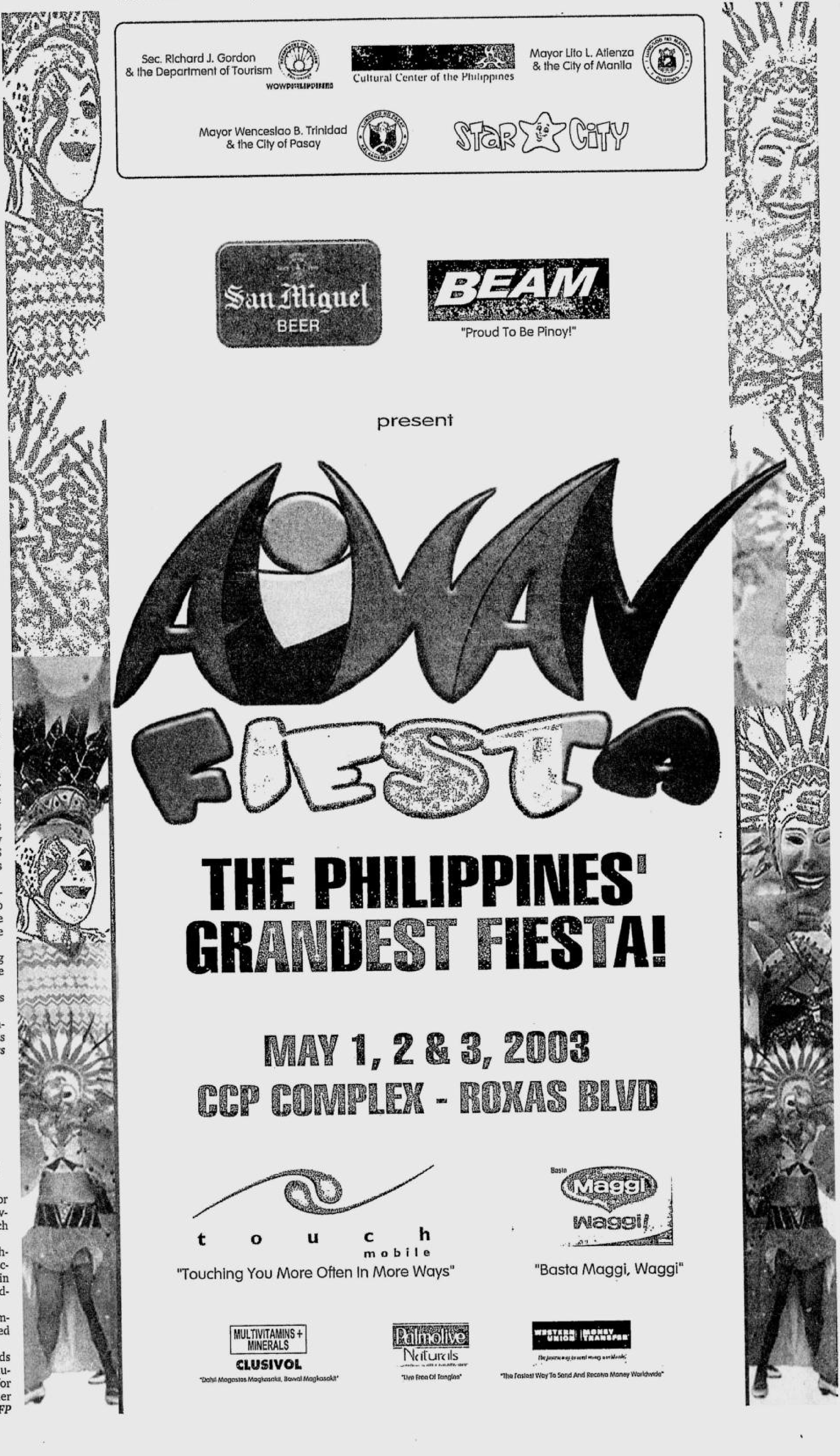
Asia-Pacific semiconductor market up 26%

SINGAPORE—The Asia-Pacific semiconductor market grew 26.2 percent in 2002, with revenue totaling $55.2 billion, industry research group Gartner Dataquest said Wednesday.

Business spending on information technology products is expected to rise in the second half of this year after the US-led war in Iraq dampened consumer demand worldwide, it said in a press statement.

Recovery in the market for personal computers and mobile phone handsets is expected to drive growth in the region, it said.

"In addition, the growing trend towards outsourcing electronics equipment manufacturing is fueling further demand for semiconductors in the region," said Gartner analyst Philip Koh. *AFP*



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BUSINESS

IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

GMA to meet US contractors

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo will meet with top American contractors on May 21 during her state visit to the United States to make sure that the Philippines get a piece of the postwar reconstruction projects in Iraq.

Former Foreign Affairs Secretary Roberto Romulo, head of the Philippine Public-Private Partnership for the Reconstruction and Development of Iraq, said the President would make a presentation on the Philippines' capability in supplying the workforce requirements of US contractors in Iraq.

Romulo estimated that Iraq's postwar reconstruction could reach $100 billion in five years, which would open up vast opportunities for Filipino skilled labor who has vast experiences working in the Middle East.

The US prime contractors that have confirmed their attendance in the President's meeting were Bechtel Corp., Black and Veatch, Cargill, Creative Associates International Inc., Fluor, Halliburton, International Resource Group, KBR, Louis Berger, Parsons Corp., Perini Corp., Research Triangle Institute, Stevedoring Services of America, and Washington Group International.

"The task force needs to continue to aggressively market and prepare companies and workers for deployment," Romulo said. Romulo said the task force would initially work towards establishing its presence in the Iraq using neighboring Kuwait as a staging point.

Romulo said the Philippines would initially focus on providing skilled workers in view of the immediate need for these professionals to man Iraq's basic services and build its infrastructure and utilities.

ADB to hold annual meet in RP on June 30

THE ASIAN Development Bank (ADB) yesterday said it would hold its annual meeting in Manila on June 30, after postponing its planned meeting in May.

The meeting was originally scheduled to be held in Istanbul in Turkey from May 21 to 23. The multilateral lending agency based in Manila did not give any reason for the postponement which it announced in April, but Turkey's neighbor Iraq had been under attack by US-led forces at the time. The ADB said the annual meeting would be smaller than usual, with fewer attendees and business will be conducted only during the morning. There will be a luncheon hosted jointly with ADB president Tadao Chino.

Next year's annual meeting will be held in Jeju Island in South Korea in May 2004. Turkey has offered to host the 2005 meeting and a final decision will be made at the June meeting, the ADB said. *Reuters*

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IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

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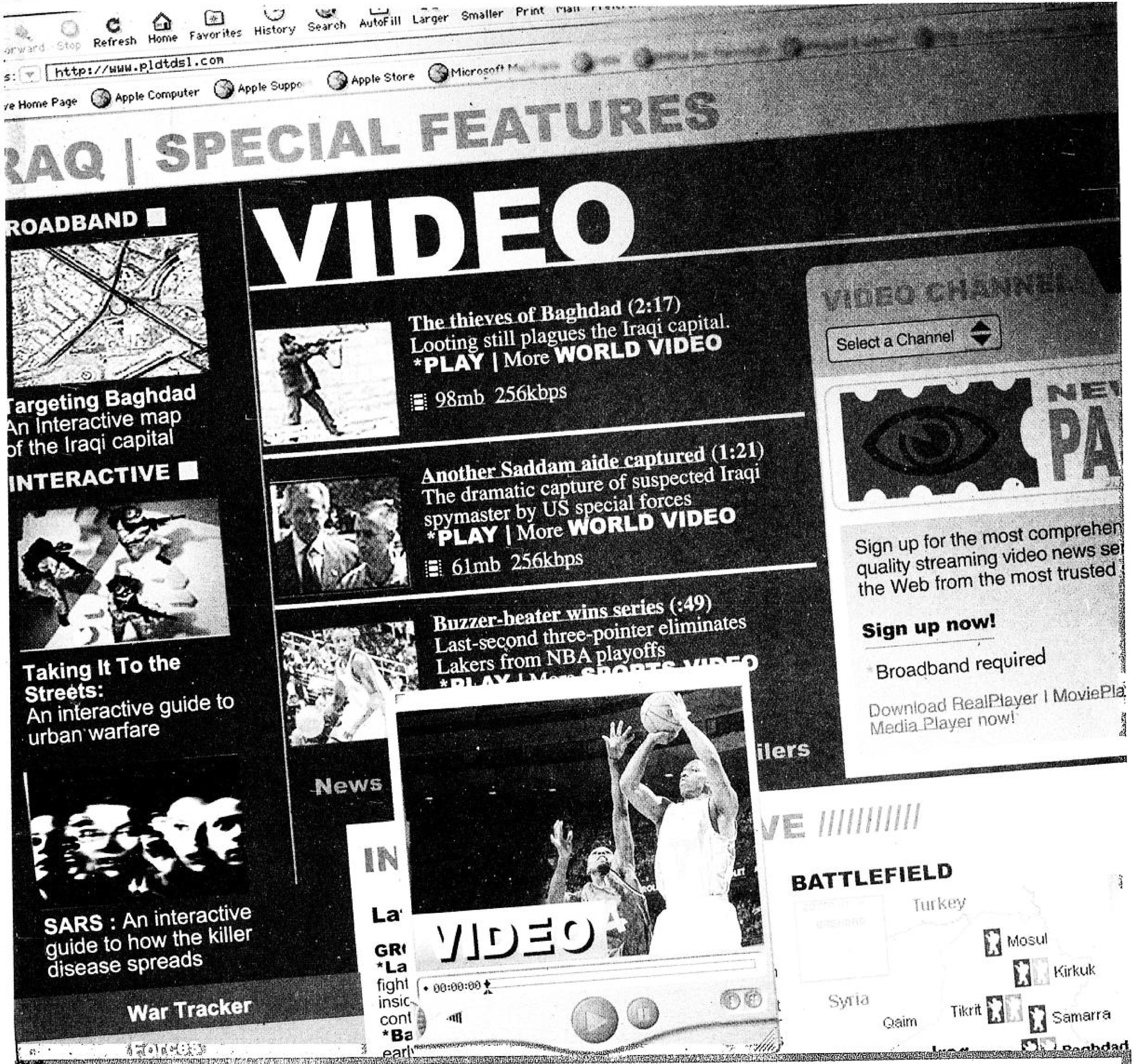
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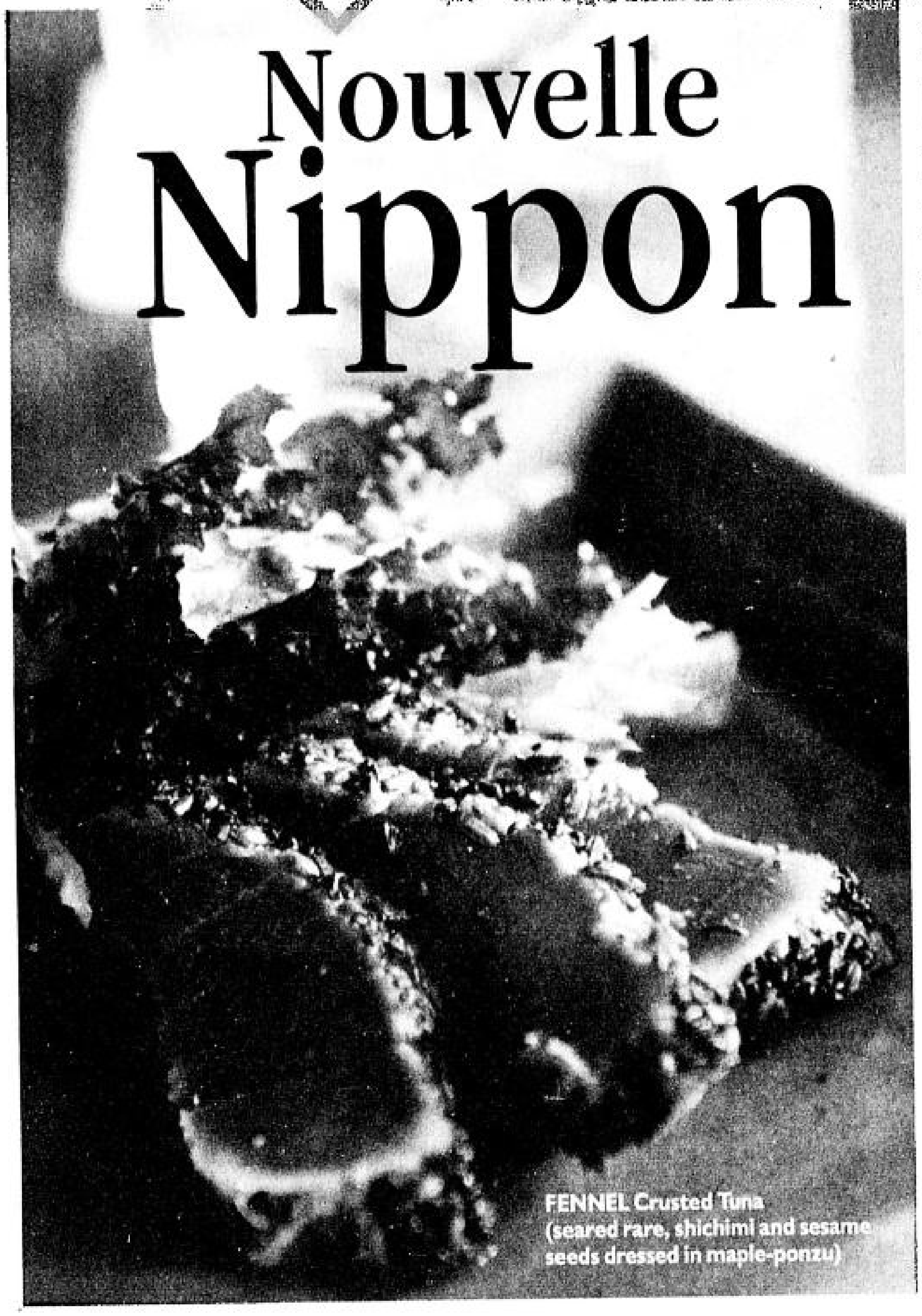
FENNEL Crusted Tuna (seared rare, shichimi and sesame seeds dressed in maple-ponzu)

Largely influenced by the New York resto Nobu, Kai reinterprets Japanese cuisine using Filipino, Italian, French, Greek and other influences

Text by Rowena C. Burgos
Photos by Mike Alquinto

RICCO Ocampo, who co-owns Kitchen, Mangan and Ebun, is bent on redefining Japanese cuisine for the Philippine culinary landscape.

According to him, there's a lot of ground to cover. While most diners do not have an appetite for such esoteric Japanese delicacies as raw lobster or crab-brain dip, Ocampo has noticed that Filipino diners have been adventurous even before he opened Kai in Greenbelt 2, Makati.

In Japanese, "kai" refers to a gathering. But according to Kai's menu, "The restaurant stands for hospitality and unique brand of Japanese cuisine."

"Kai is a Japanese restaurant offering nouvelle cuisine. The food is consistently of high quality," says Ocampo, who co-owns Kai with Doris Ho, Rikki Dee, Tony Legarda and the restaurant's chefs: Gilbert Pangilinan, Michael Yap, Rex Soriano, Pierre Angeli Dee, Rachelle Gonzales and Pinky Gutierrez.

Nudged by consumer interest in other cultural influences, Japanese flavors are moving into many levels of foodservice, a trend that shows no sign of slowing. With its heavy reliance on fresh seafood and vegetables, the cuisine has many appealing elements, from perceived healthfulness and bold, clean flavors to its spare aesthetic.

Young chefs

According to Kai's young chefs Pangilinan, Yap and Gonzales, the restaurant's menu is modern Japanese.

"The menu's major influence is Japanese. And it's apparent in the cooking techniques, ingredients and presentation of food," says Yap.

"Like Chinese cuisine, Japanese food is one of Metro Manila's strong gastronomic suits. This is evident in the growing number of Japanese restaurants in many places and the growing clientele of Kai," Gonzales adds.

Japanese chef Meg Sasagawa taught the chefs the traditional way of preparing and cooking the food.

"The styles and tastes of Kai's menu have been influenced by Nobu. But you won't find dishes here that are similar to Nobu's," Pangilinan says.

Yap, Pangilinan, Soriano and Dee, together with Ricky Estrellado (who's now the head chef of Nobu), worked at the renowned Nobu restaurant of chef Nobu Matsushita in New York, which specializes in Japanese-Peruvian cuisine. These graduates of the Culinary Institute of America and the New York Restaurant School presented a menu from Nobu for the fundraising dinner of Asia Society, which was organized by Ocampo and Ho two years ago.

After that fundraiser, Pangilinan, Yap, Soriano and Dee decided to stay in the Philippines. So Ocampo and partners put up Kai. "We wanted to support these fresh entrepreneurs. Kai is actually the ball game of these young chefs," Ocampo says.

Rooted in the tradition of Zen purity, Kai welcomes diners into its serene minimalist interiors, which was designed by Ana Sy, to enjoy good food. On the other hand, Tina Ocampo chose Kai's plates, cups and glasses, pots and décor.

Unique dishes

Kai's unique dishes include wasabi-battered oyster deep fried and served with balsamic dynamite; citrus and ginger splashed

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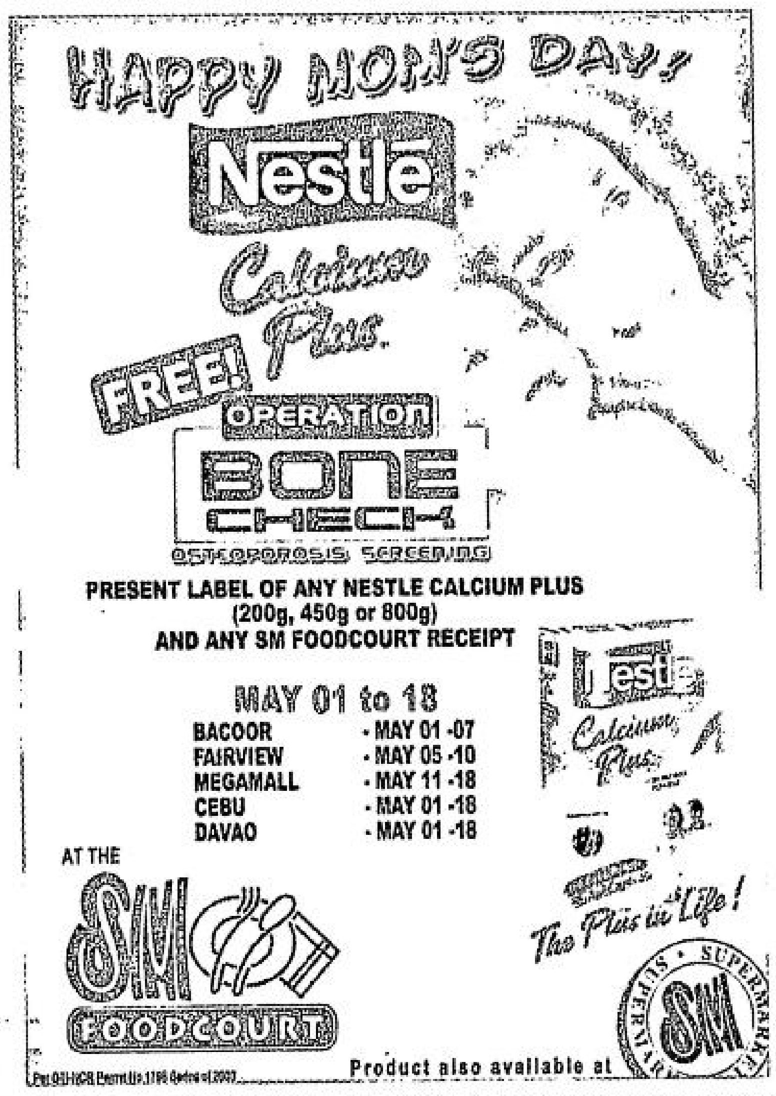
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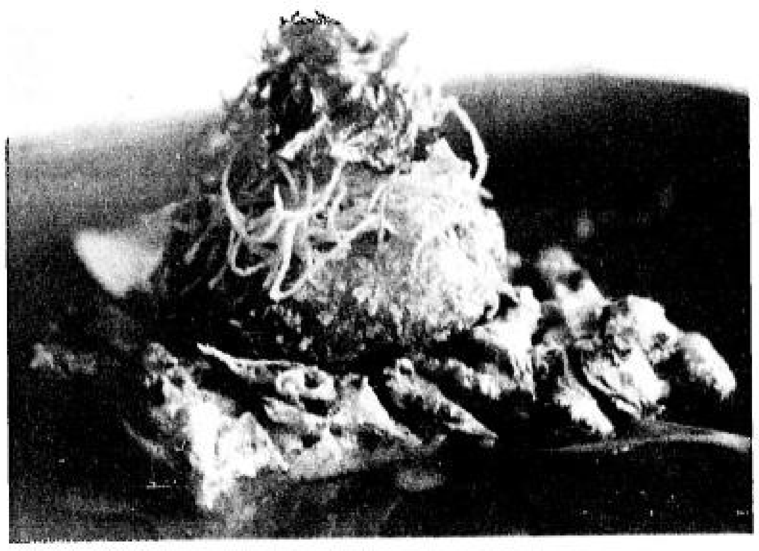
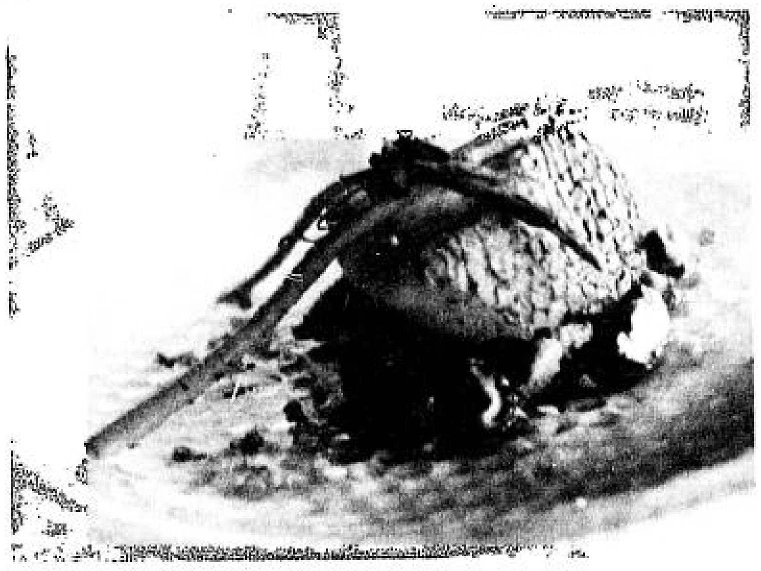
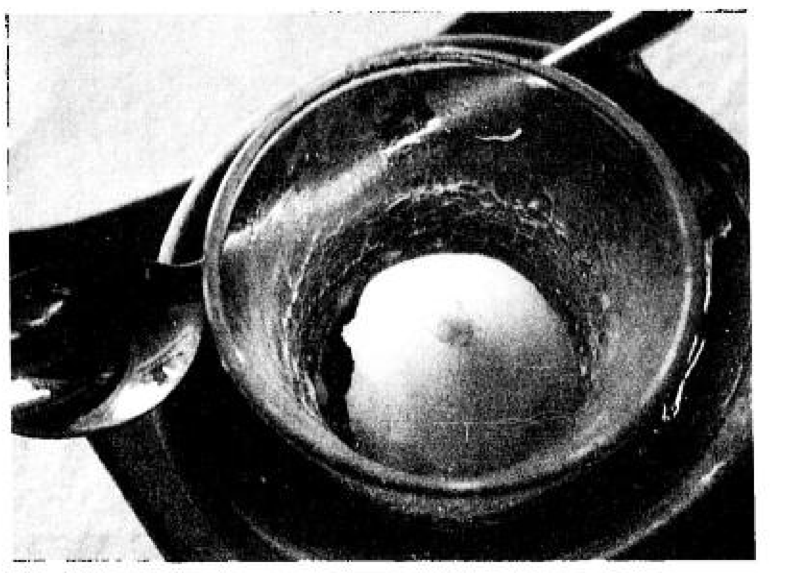

GRILLED Black Angus Rib-eye Steak with potato croquette and wasabi coconut sauce


PAN Seared Sea Bass (asparagus, mushroom duxell and shiitake-truffle scented broth)


GUYABANO Sherbet

Nouvelle Nippon

From page C1

slivers of hamachi with basil oil and sea salt; a Nagasaki-style braised pork with saffron rice cake; and yellow tail fish head braised in sweet rice wine sauce.

The thin-sliced Kobe Ishiyaki, served with hot stones for cooking and three sauces, is beef that takes 8 hours to prepare.

Desserts include silken bean (tofu) and cheesecake; trio of chocolate, citrus and green tea-flavored crème brulees; chunks of wasabi-flavored tiramisu with almond biscotti; and mini pumpkin pancakes with azuki bean paste, flambéed bananas and vanilla ice cream.

While menus at Japanese restaurants often are based on traditional fare, many dishes are contemporary renditions, with Pangilinan, Yap, Gonzales, Gutierrez, Soriano and Dee reinterpreting Kai's cuisine using Filipino, Italian, French, Greek and other influences. They embrace a freestyle approach, fashioning food with Eastern and Western components.

"The interest in Japanese flavors is changing, with more chefs incorporating Japanese ingredients in their cooking," Ocampo says.

Modern sushi

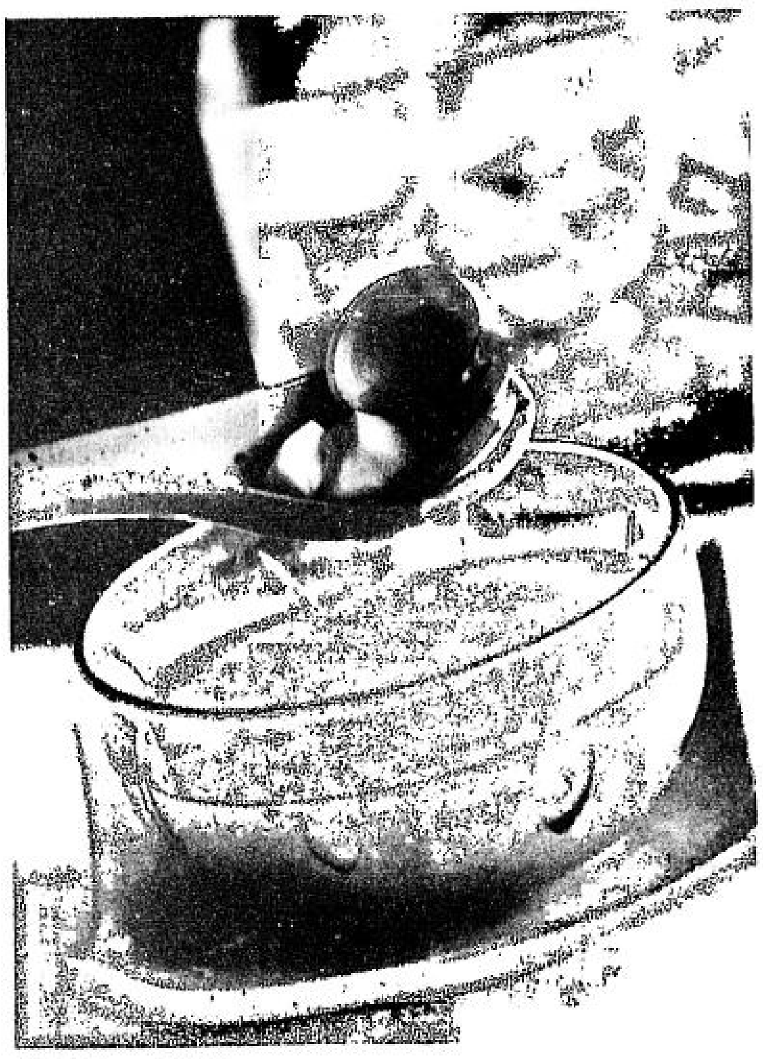
Perhaps no food is more emblematic of Japanese fare than sushi. So Kai offers not only the traditional Tekka Maki, Oshinko and California Maki sushi rolls but modern sushi rolls like Soft Shell Crab Roll, Crispy Suahe, Tempura Maki, Hamachi Yamagobo, Spicy Negi Tuna, Unaqi Kyuri and Salmon Asparagus as well.

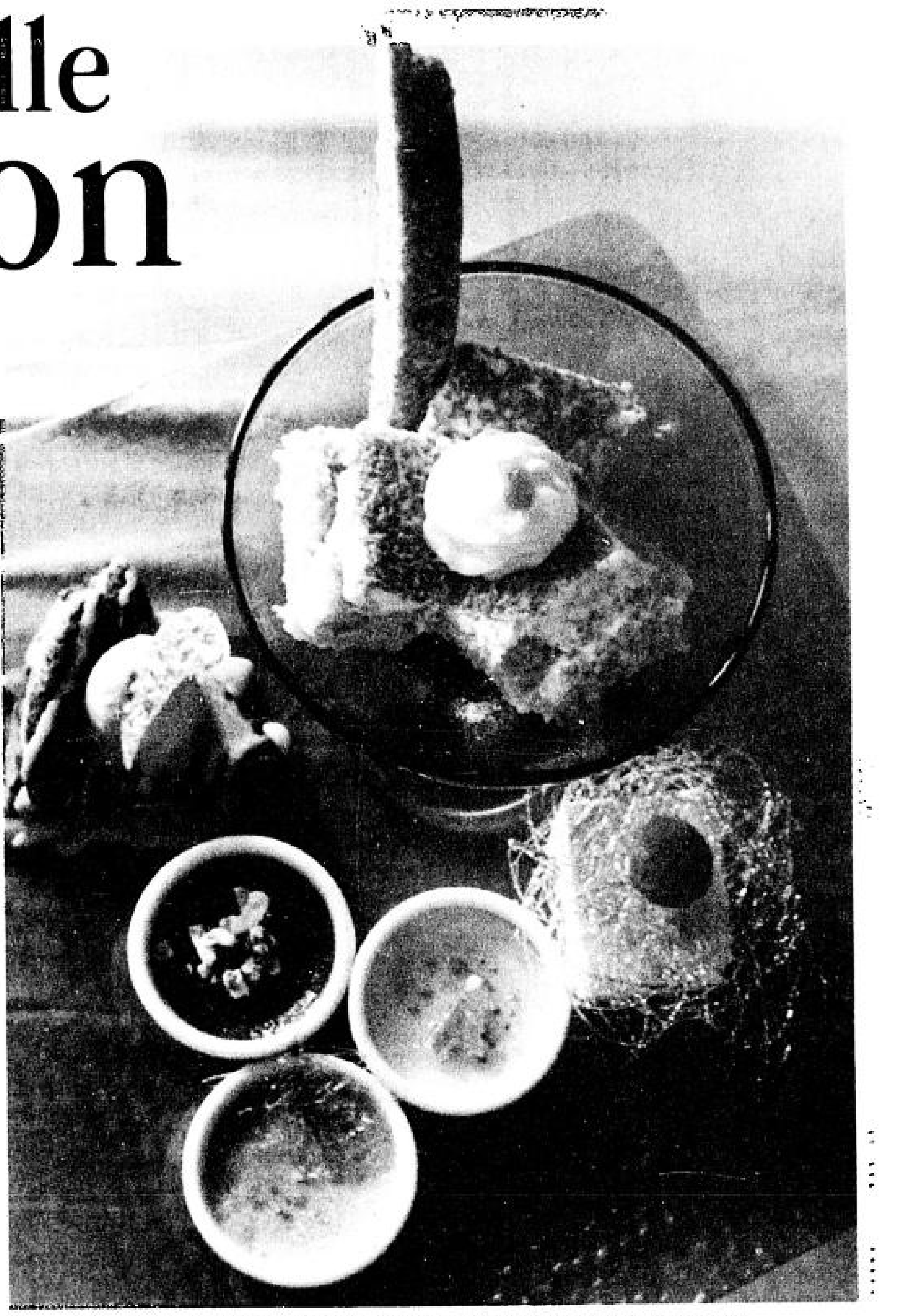
While the sweet flavor of teriyaki has found a permanent place in the Filipino repertoire, other Japanese ingredients also show strong potential. Wasabi, ponzu, yuzu, shiso and miso are just a few traditional ingredients migrating to the mainstream.

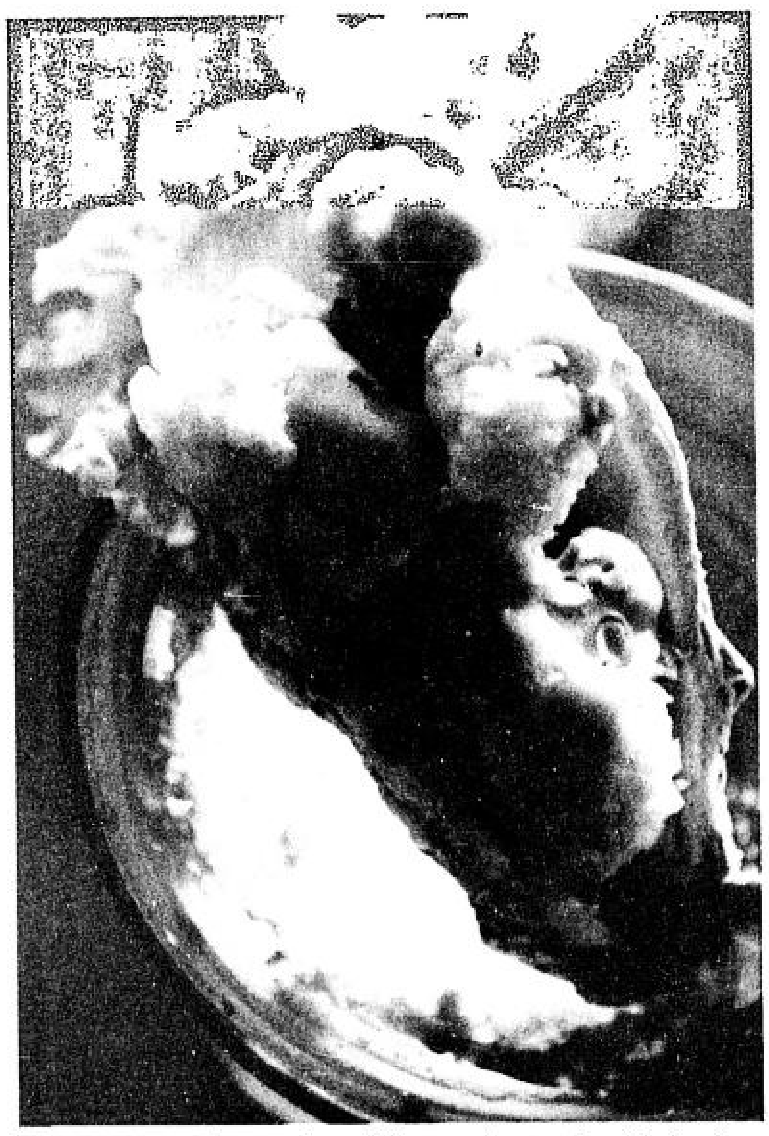
"These flavors have a certain exotic flair and allure that people can't seem to get enough of," Ocampo says. "People see Japanese dishes as healthy, fresh and light with a lot of flavor. That makes the food very popular."

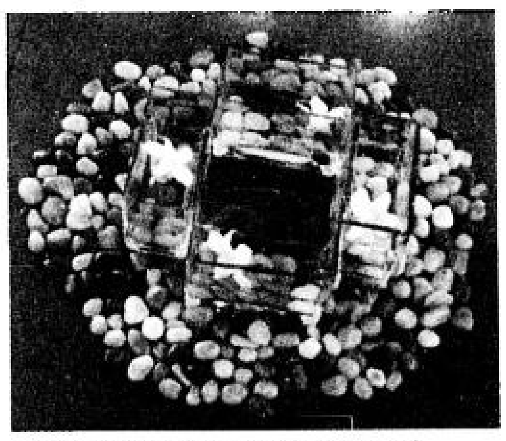
Kai is open for lunch and dinner, Monday-Friday. Call 757-5209.

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph


MISO Soup with Clams

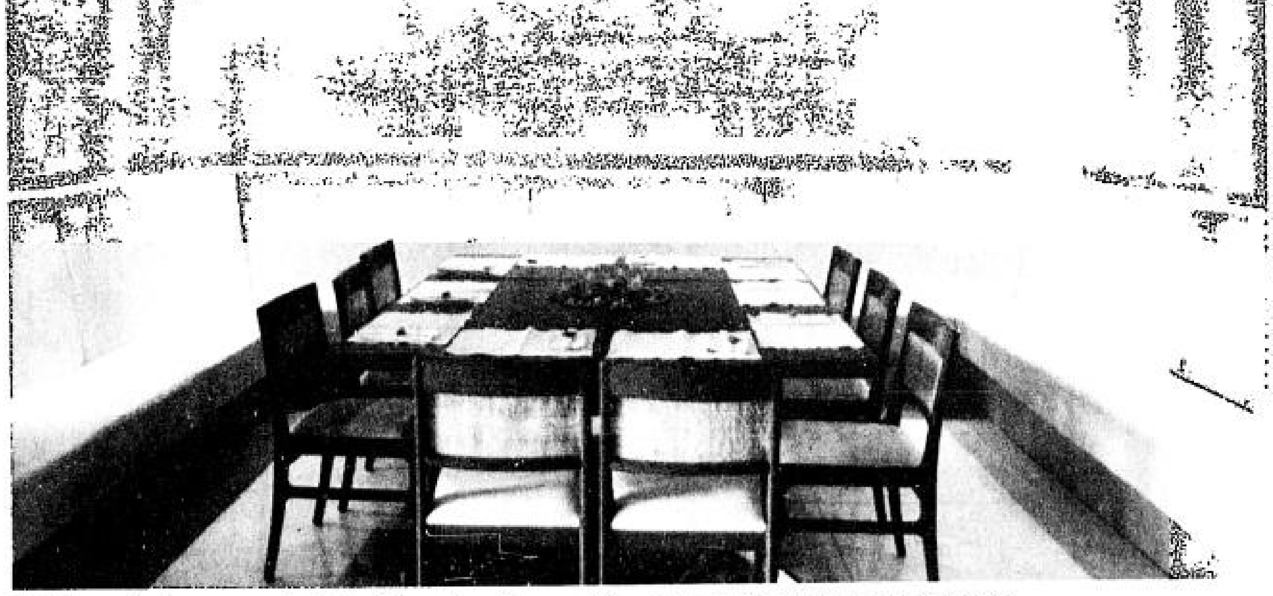

KAI TAMIS (clockwise from left): Warm Valrhona Chocolate Cake, Tiramisu, Tofu Cheesecake, and trio of Crème Brulee (a sampling of chocolate, citrus and green tea flavored crème brulees)


WASABI Oyster Tempura (wasabi-battered oyster deep fried and served with balsamic dynamite)


ORCHIDS in glasses and multicolored pebbles serve as table centerpieces at Kai.

ROOTED in Zen tradition, Kai welcomes diners to its minimalist interiors designed by Anna Sy.

RICCO Ocampo (third from left) with (from left) Nobu-trained chefs Gilbert Pangilinan, Michael Yap and pastry chef Rachelle Gonzales


KAI'S semi-private room is tiled with *capiz* and cozy with ample cream-upholstered U-seating

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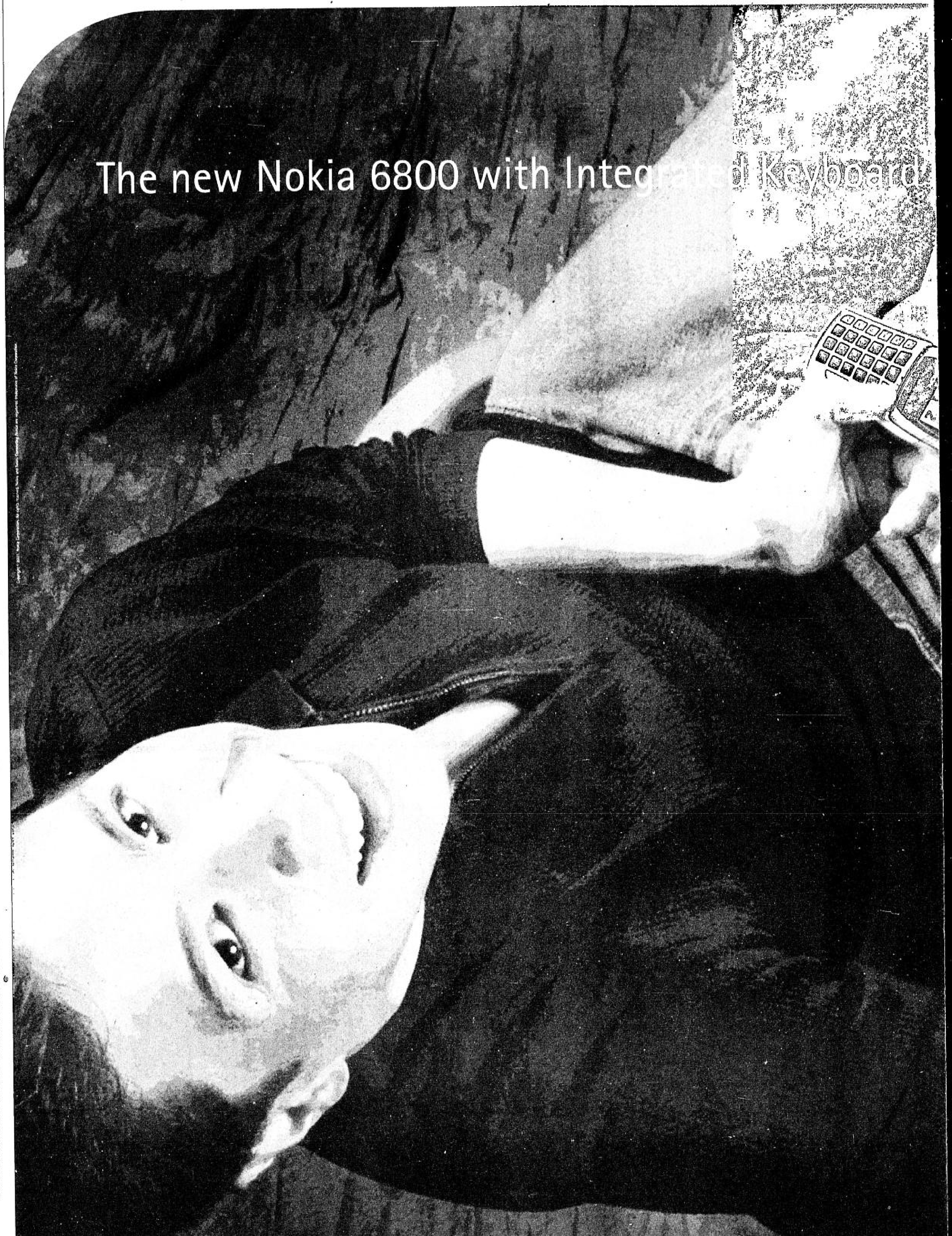
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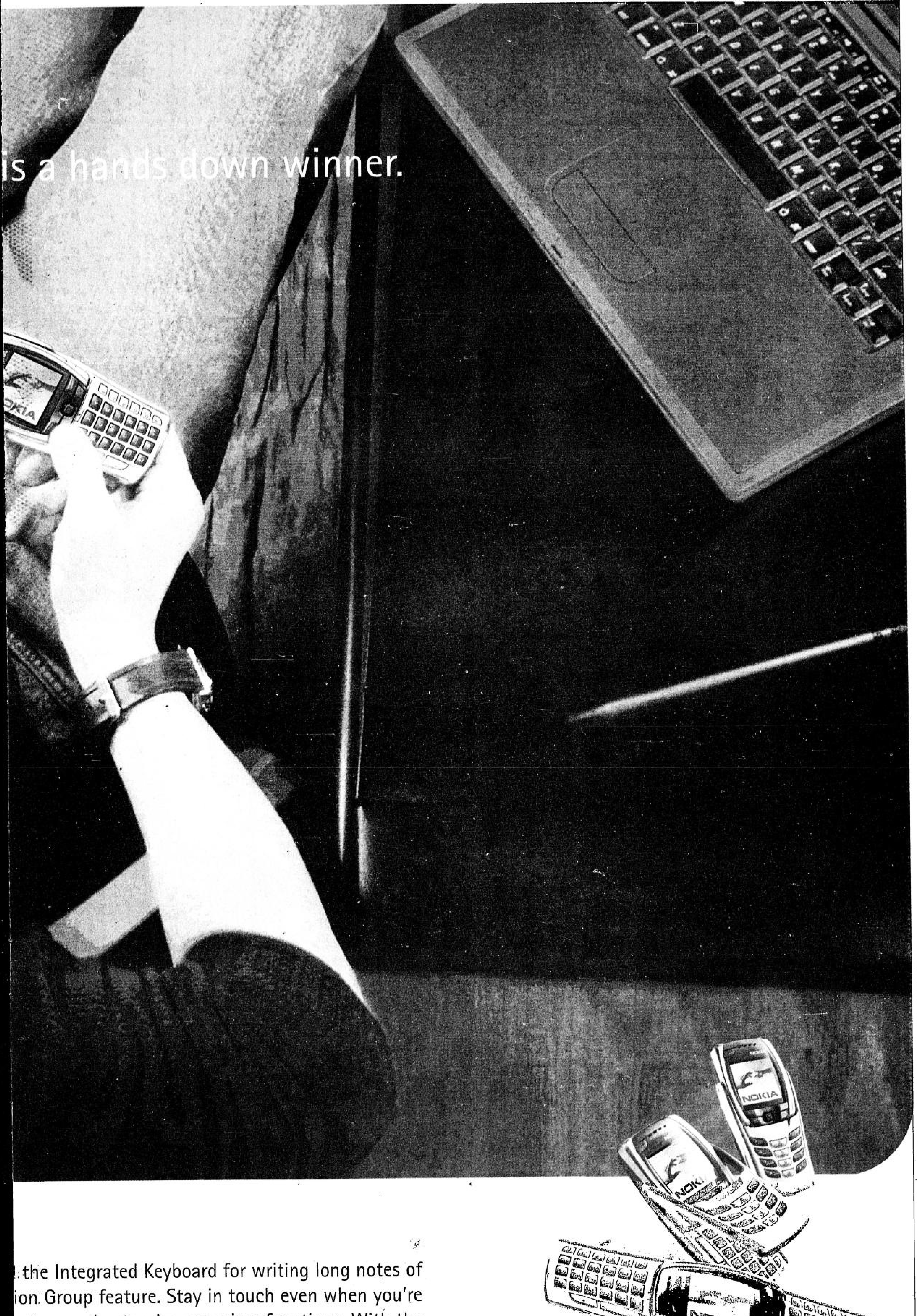

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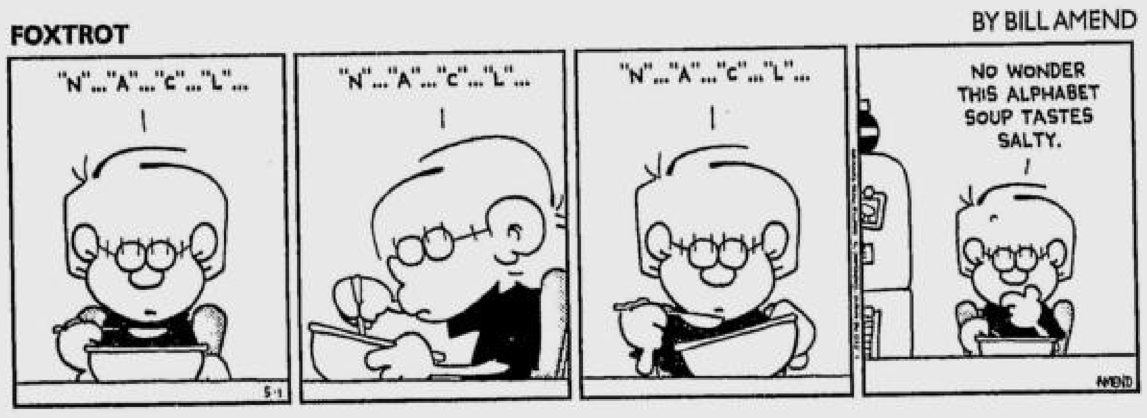
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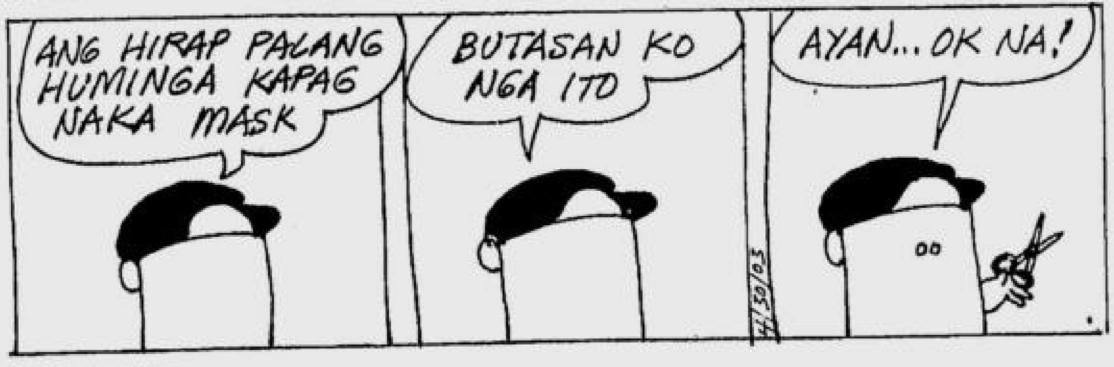
AMEND

A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ANG HIRAP PALANG HUMINGA KAPAG NAKA MASK
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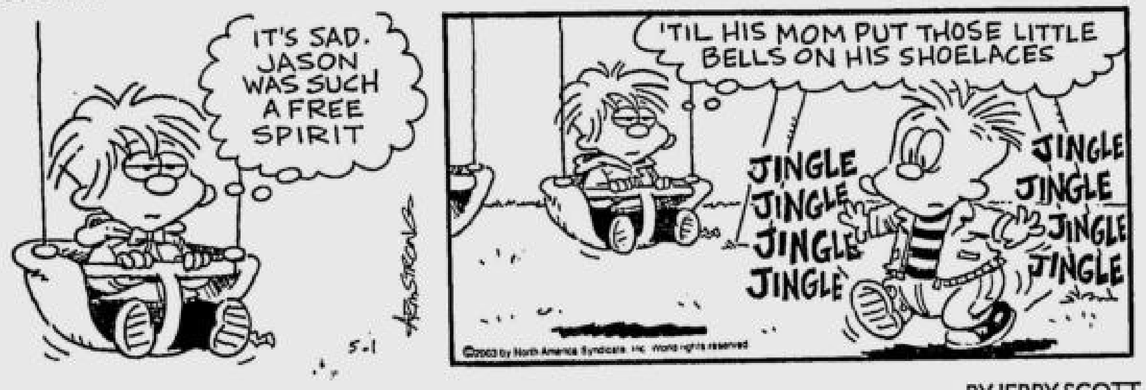
BY TOM ARMSTRONG


IT'S SAD. JASON WAS SUCH A FREE SPIRIT
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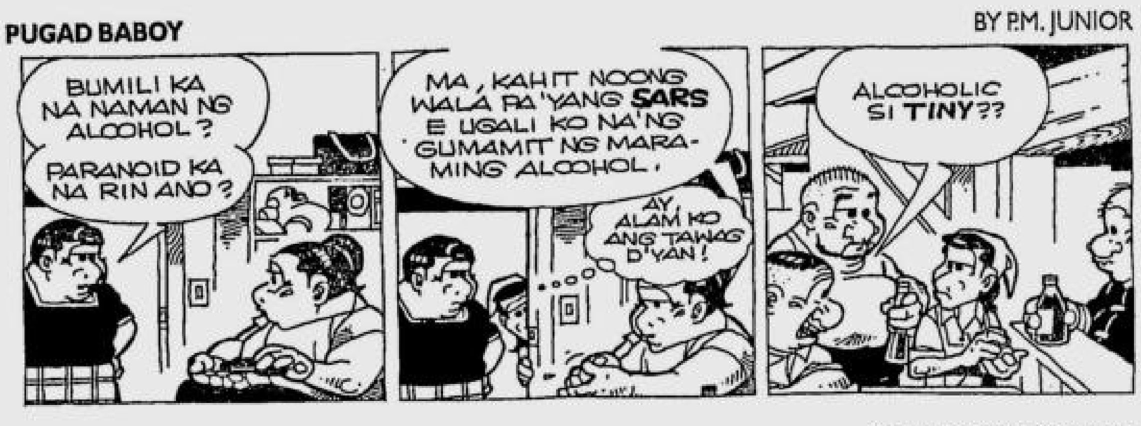
BY P.M. JUNIOR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PARANOID KA NA RIN ANO?
MA, KAHIT NOONG WALA PA 'YANG SARS E UGALI KO NA'NG GUMAMIT NG MARAMING ALCOHOL.
AY, ALAM KO ANG TAWAG D'YAN!
ALCOHOLIC SI TINY??

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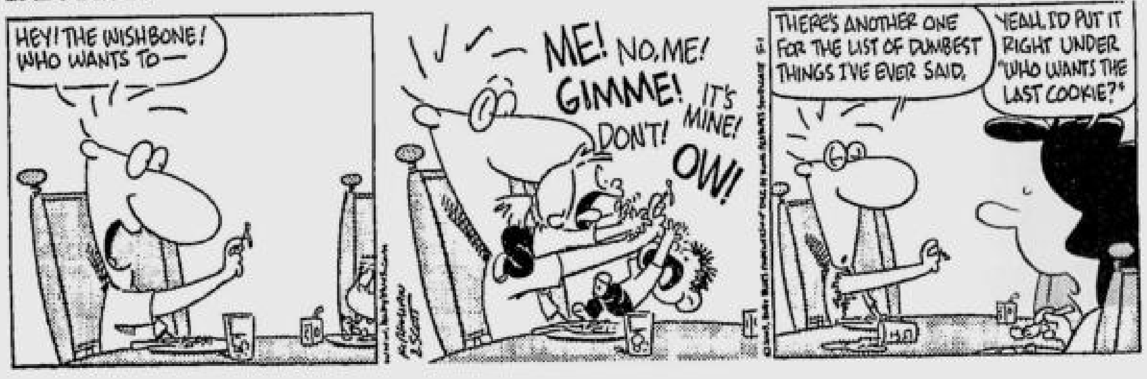
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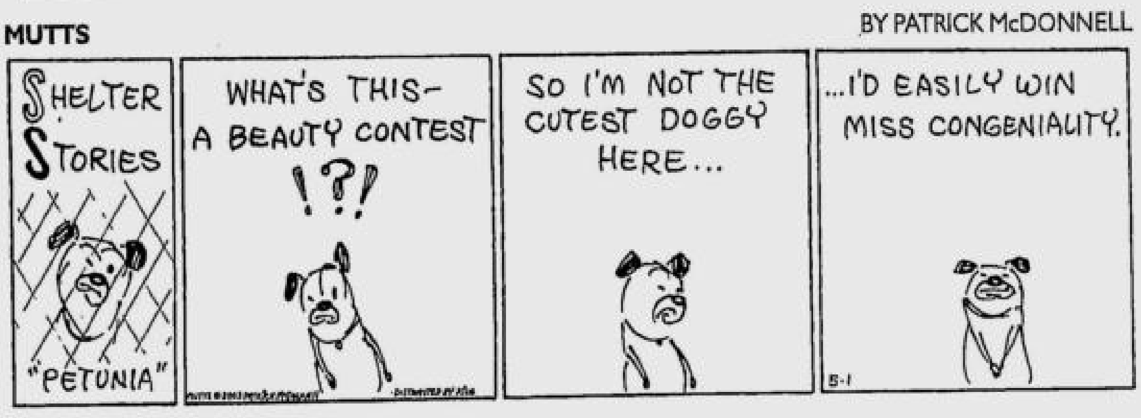
ME! NO, ME! GIMME! IT'S MINE! DON'T! OW!
THERE'S ANOTHER ONE FOR THE LIST OF DUMBEST THINGS I'VE EVER SAID.
YEAH, I'D PUT IT RIGHT UNDER "WHO WANTS THE LAST COOKIE?"
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

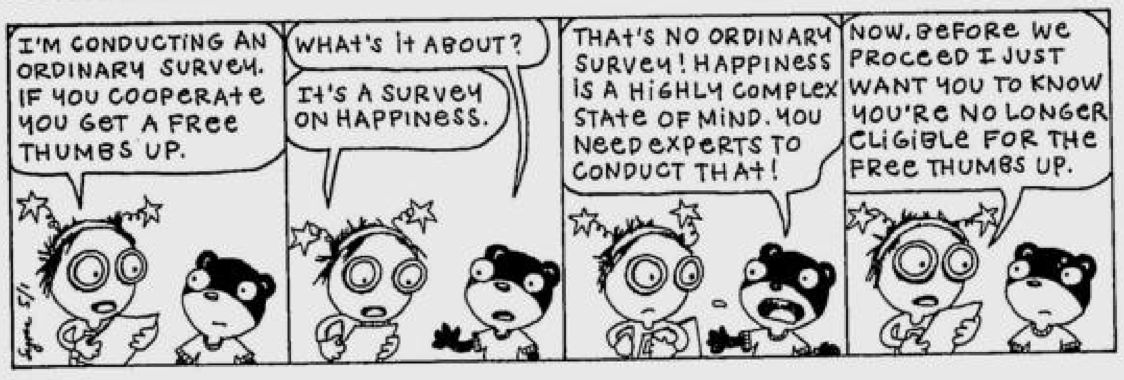
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHELTER STORIES
"PETUNIA"
WHAT'S THIS- A BEAUTY CONTEST !?!
SO I'M NOT THE CUTEST DOGGY HERE...
...I'D EASILY WIN MISS CONGENIALITY.
5-1

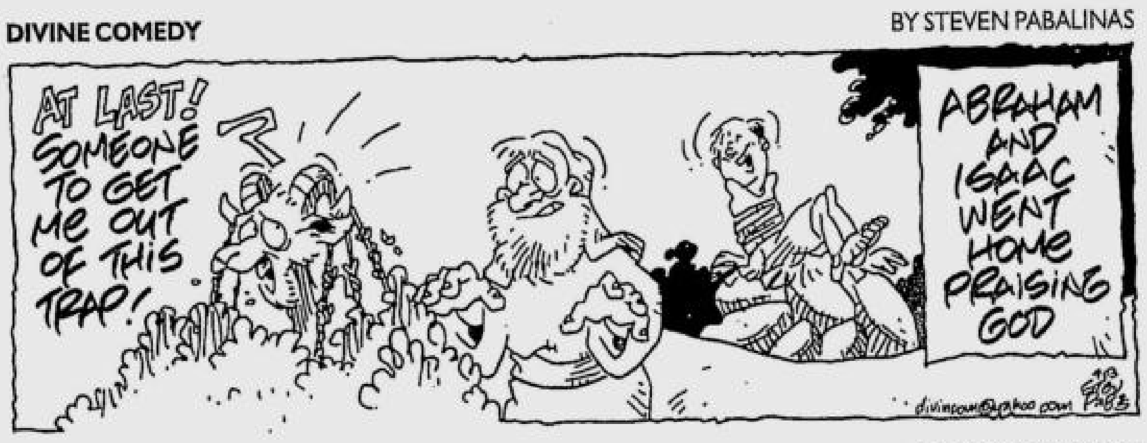
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I'M CONDUCTING AN ORDINARY SURVEY. IF YOU COOPERATE YOU GET A FREE THUMBS UP.
WHAT'S IT ABOUT?
IT'S A SURVEY ON HAPPINESS.
THAT'S NO ORDINARY SURVEY! HAPPINESS IS A HIGHLY COMPLEX STATE OF MIND. YOU NEED EXPERTS TO CONDUCT THAT!
NOW, BEFORE WE PROCEED I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW YOU'RE NO LONGER ELIGIBLE FOR THE FREE THUMBS UP.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


AT LAST! SOMEONE TO GET ME OUT OF THIS TRAP!
ABRAHAM AND ISAAC WENT HOME PRAISING GOD
divinecomic@yahoo.com

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You love beautiful things and are frequently personally stylish. Your excellent image is due in part to your perfectionism. You are a shrewd observer of the human condition and not shy about commenting on it. You have a natural authority and nobility. This year major changes will take place in your life, perhaps as significant as in 1994.
Birthdate of: Larry Gatlin, singer; Christine Baranski, actress; David Beckham, soccer player.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): All your relations with friends and groups are wonderful today! You feel unusually close and cozy to people, and fortunately, the feeling is mutual.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Good feelings abound! There is a small chance you might be disappointed with someone who does not live up to your expectations. The question is—were your expectations realistic?

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Feelings of sympathy are aroused by the media or people far away today. You feel a heartfelt understanding for those from different cultures and different countries.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): It is easy to feel a kind of selfless love for others today. In fact, you might contribute to charities or give help to those who are less fortunate than you.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a wonderful day to daydream and fantasize. Conversations with others are full of "what ifs" and possibilities for the future.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Co-workers are unusually supportive today. You find it refreshing and encouraging. In turn, you want to help others out as well. (This makes the time fly by.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You feel something close to a soul union with a romantic interest today. However, your expectations could be so high that you're disappointed because you hoped for the impossible.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Others are prepared to help you at home or with a family situation today. Good. With chaos and tension at home now, you need all the help you can get.

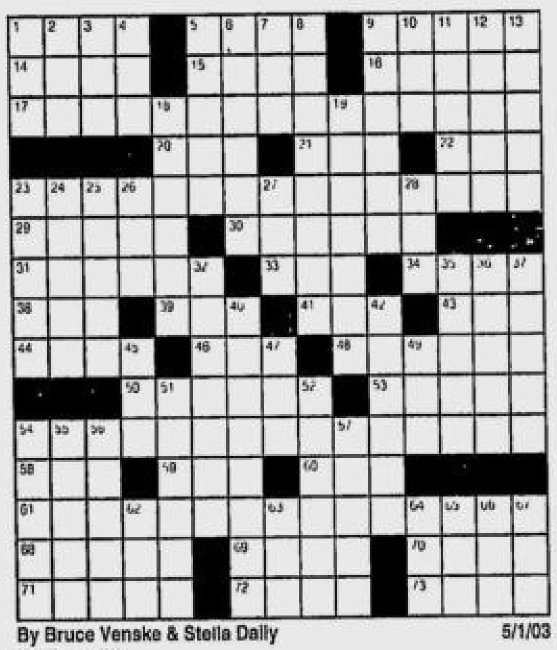
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Your creative urges are strong today. Do anything that requires artistic input or an appreciation of beauty. Enjoy playful activities with children as well.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You definitely want to make where you live look as lovely as possible. It's not just to impress others, it's to please yourself—and, after all, you live there!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Your idealism is aroused today. You want to do anything that will make the world a better place. You have strong talents for networking and rousing the troops.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You want to buy something gorgeous and luxurious. If you can afford it, do it. You more often regret the things you didn't do than the things you did.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Bruce Venske & Stella Daily
Madison, WI
5/1/03

ACROSS
1 Drudgery
5 Tennis stadium honoree
9 __ del Sol
14 Regarding
15 Takes to court
16 Remove fasteners
17 Start of an observation
20 Risked sum
21 Scandinavian rug
22 Bairn-sized
23 Part 2 of observation
29 Entices
30 Scan-line pattern
31 Garden blooms
33 Hemi-fly?
34 What's bent in a bow
38 Birthday figure
39 Have dinner
41 Hockey great
43 H.S. subj.
44 Medieval peon
46 Drinks counter
48 AARP member
50 Oaken vessel of song
53 Viewpoint
54 Part 3 of observation
58 Product to mine
59 Is no longer?
60 DDE's command
61 End of observation
68 Paramour
69 Adam's son
70 Dunkable treat
71 Brew holder
72 __ a one (none)
73 Greek hero?

DOWN
1 __ Mahal
2 Buckeyes' sch.
3 Part of TGIF
4 Destiny
5 Black-ink item
6 Swain
7 Cloth border
8 Starbucks order
9 Parish clergyman
10 Can. prov.
11 Progeny
12 Pointed like a fork
13 Chips in chips
18 Humbles
19 Raw appetizer
23 Rap-sheet word
24 Abrupt increase
25 More ironic
26 Males
27 __ "King" Cole
28 Torah holder
32 Secondary family group
35 Whinny
36 "__ Gay"
37 Long-legged bird
40 Neighbor of Iran
42 Motive
45 Hoover's org.
47 Striped-shirt wearer
49 180 degrees from SSE
51 Showing no signs of use
52 Rock on the edge
54 Deceives
55 Equivocator's phrase
56 Superman portrayer
57 Europe's boot?
62 Chinese river
63 Grp. for mom-&-pop stores
64 Canine
65 Young fish
66 "__ the fields we go..."
67 Australian joey

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

A	P	B	S		U	P	E	N	D		A	W	L	S
L	A	R	K		M	A	N	I	A		S	H	O	O
G	R	A	Y	M	A	T	T	E	R		H	I	S	S
E	M	I	L	E		S	E	C	T		O	T	T	O
R	A	D	I	S	H		R	E	H	I	R	E		
			N	A	I	F				D	E	S	K	S
T	O	B	E		K	E	I	T	E	L		A	N	T
O	W	L		B	E	E	L	I	N	E		L	E	O
D	N	A		A	D	D	L	E	D		B	E	E	P
O	S	C	A	R				S	O	S	A			
		K	I	D	D	E	D		W	A	R	B	L	E
J	A	B	S		E	R	I	E		A	R	I	A	S
E	L	A	L		B	R	O	W	N	B	A	G	I	T
E	L	L	E		R	O	D	E	O		G	O	N	E
P	A	L	S		A	L	E	R	T		E	T	E	S

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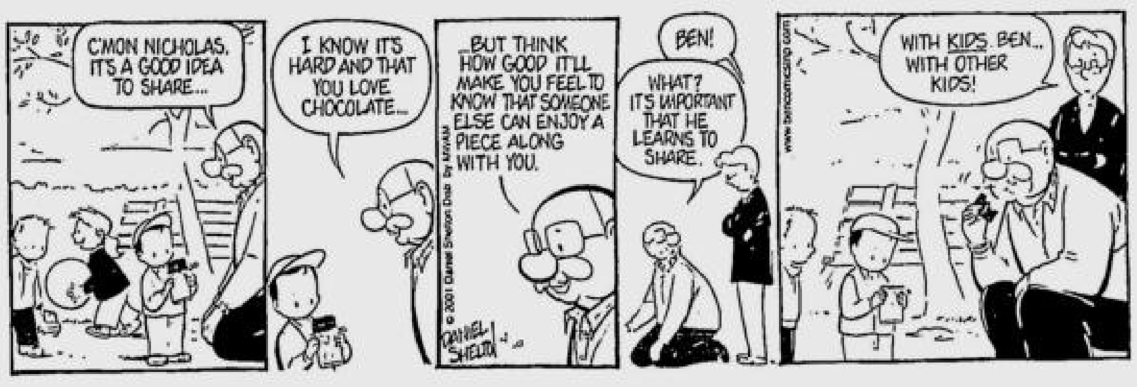
5/1/03

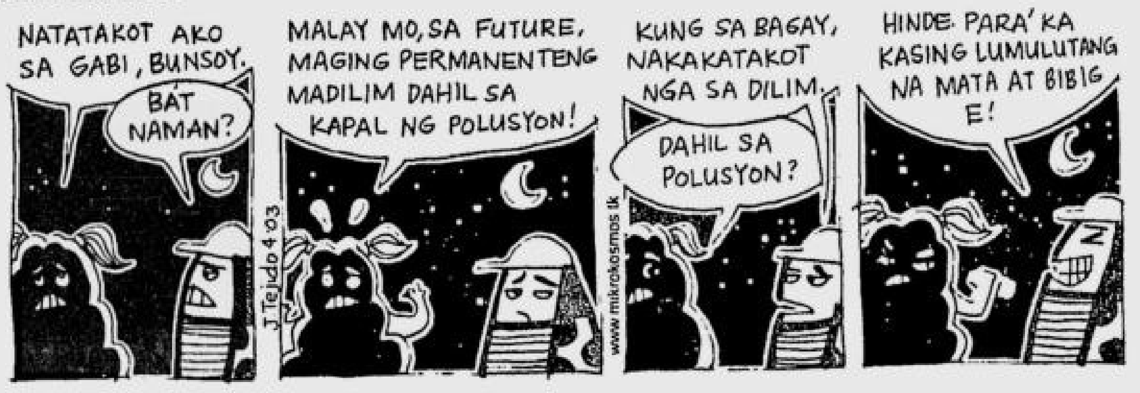
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


C'MON NICHOLAS, IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO SHARE...
I KNOW IT'S HARD AND THAT YOU LOVE CHOCOLATE...
...BUT THINK HOW GOOD IT'LL MAKE YOU FEEL TO KNOW THAT SOMEONE ELSE CAN ENJOY A PIECE ALONG WITH YOU.
BEN!
WHAT? IT'S IMPORTANT THAT HE LEARNS TO SHARE.
WITH KIDS, BEN... WITH OTHER KIDS!
DANIEL SHELTON
www.bencomics.com

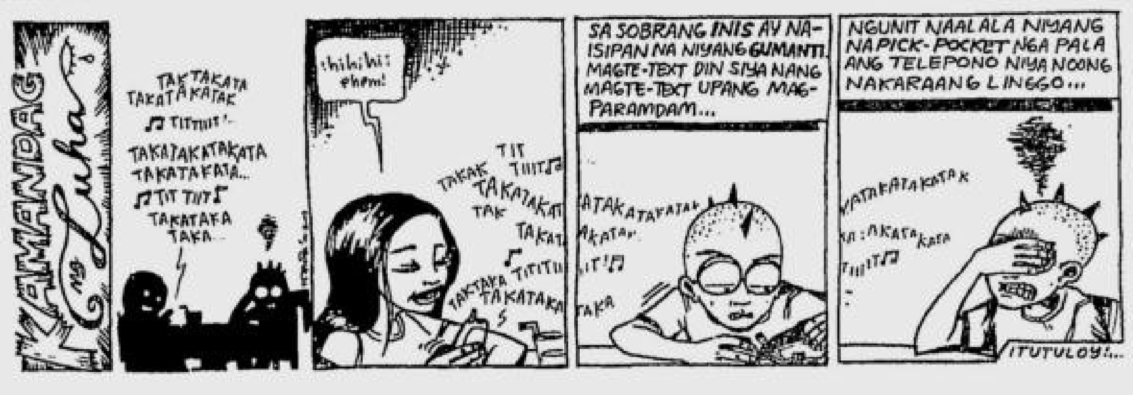
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


NATATAKOT AKO SA GABI, BUNSOY.
BAT NAMAN?
MALAY MO, SA FUTURE, MAGING PERMANENTENG MADILIM DAHIL SA KAPAL NG POLUSYON!
KUNG SA BAGAY, NAKAKATAKOT NGA SA DILIM.
DAHIL SA POLUSYON?
HINDE. PARA' KA KASING LUMULUTANG NA MATA AT BIBIG E!
J. Tejido 4·03
www.mikrokosmos.tk

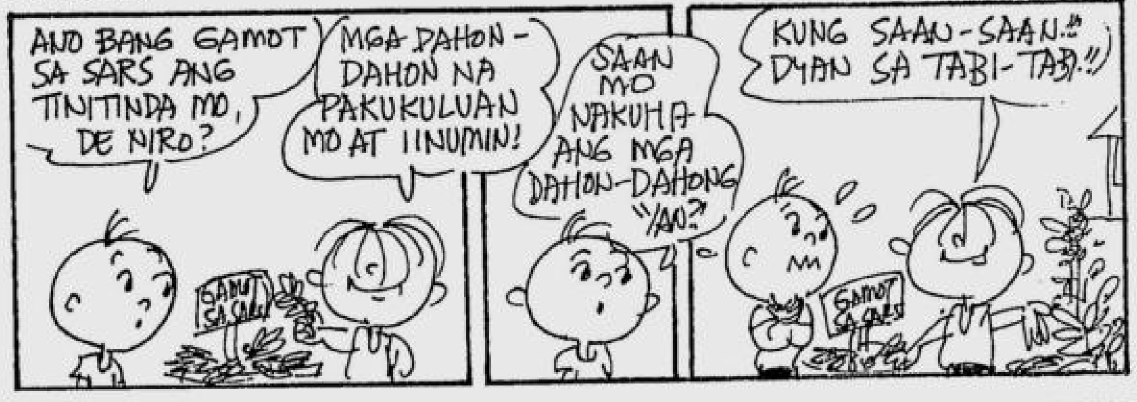
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


KAMANDAG ng Luha
TAKTAKATA TAKATAKATAK
TITIIT
TAKATAKATAKATA TAKATAKATA...
TIT TIIT
TAKATAKA TAKA
thihihi ehem!
TAKAK TAKATAKAT TAK TAKAT
TIT TIIIT
TAKTAKA TAKATAKA
TITIITI
SA SOBRANG INIS AY NAISIPAN NA NIYANG GUMANTI. MAGTE-TEXT DIN SIYA NANG MAGTE-TEXT UPANG MAGPARAMDAM...
ATAKATAKATAK AKATAK IIT TAKA
NGUNIT NAALALA NIYANG NA PICK-POCKET NGA PALA ANG TELEPONO NIYA NOONG NAKARAANG LINGGO...
ATAKATAKATAK AKATAKATA TIIIT
ITUTULOY!...

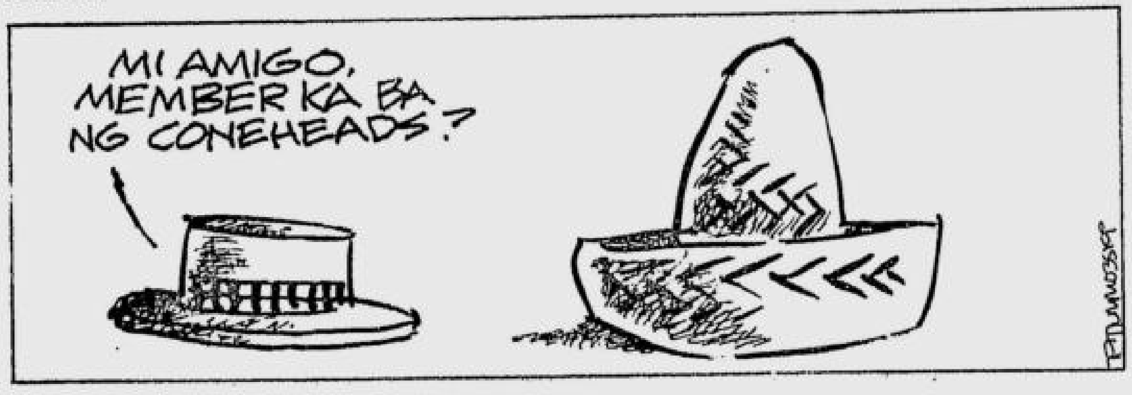
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANO BANG GAMOT SA SARS ANG TINITINDA MO, DE NIRO?
MGA DAHON-DAHON NA PAKUKULUAN MO AT IINUMIN!
GAMOT SA SARS
SAAN MO NAKUHA ANG MGA DAHON-DAHONG 'YAN?
KUNG SAAN-SAAN!! DYAN SA TABI-TABI!!
GAMOT SA SARS

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


MI AMIGO, MEMBER KA BA NG CONEHEADS?

Family-owned triumvirate of restaurants reveals secrets of success

VEEJAY Villavicencio at the Dads Ultimate Buffet—a three-in-one buffet offering the best dishes from Kamayan, Saisaki and Dads.

WITH ALL the competition around, Veejay Villavicencio, son of veteran restaurateur Vic Vic Villavicencio, says Dads, Kamayan and Saisaki restaurants have managed to stay ahead of the pack because they offer what people want most in a restaurant: quality food at the most reasonable price.

He recalls that when, they started offering buffet meals, the service was only available in hotels and was expensive. The chain realized it was possible to get into the buffet market with great value.

Buffets in the well-known chain feature a wide variety of dishes—Kamayan offering Filipino favorites, Saisaki Japanese cuisine, and Dads continental fare.

Each of the Dads, Saisaki and Kamayan branches has a family member in charge. Villavicencio is managing director of the Megamall outlets.

The young Villavicencios were exposed to the business at an early age, as their father encouraged them to have summer jobs in the different outlets. Veejay said he bussed tables, manned the sushi bar, cooked in the kitchen to get a feel of the business.

He joined the business right after finishing college.

Villavicencio says they constantly think of ways to keep customers interested and satisfied. The chain now has Dads Ultimate Buffet, a showcase of the "best of the best" of all of the restaurants in the group, from *lechon* in Kamayan, to roast beef in Dads, to the sushi bar in Saisaki. But the regular Dads, Kamayan and Saisaki buffets are still around.

Buffet at Dads is P395 at lunchtime and P495 at dinner. In Kamayan it's P275 the whole day, and P350 for lunch and P450 for dinner at Saisaki.

Villavicencio says since constant change is central to the business, buffet themes change every quarter. Saisaki is now offering its Tokyo festival, Kamayan its Seafood Festival, and Dads its Italian Festival.

For fast-food diners, the Triple V Express continues to offer meal packages for customers at friendly prices. A recent addition is the Merienda Boom Time, when two snack items go for P39 2-6 p.m. daily. The Pinoy League promo, on the other hand, gives diners a welcome-back dish coupon for every two orders of Filipino dishes. Lovers of Japanese food can get the Saisaki Shokuji set meals from P225 to P250 only.

Villavicencio says although the restaurant group's staff is courteous and well-trained, management constantly maintains good relations with the staff and keeps communication lines open to encourage even better service.

Japanese snack is a hit with yuppies

KOBE Krunch, a modern take on the age-old Japanese rice snack, has added zest to the traditional crunch with newer and more exciting flavors of Zesty Seaweed, Natural Sweet and Chili Onion.

The snack is becoming a popular snack for fast-paced, career-driven personalities like Yael Buencamino and Candy Reyes, brothers JB and Pao Magsaysay, and architect and musician Johanne Sebastian.

Buencamino prefers Kobe Krunch's Chili Onion flavor while Reyes favors Kobe Zesty Seaweed.

The Magsaysay brothers and Sebastian all share a fondness for the snack, with the latter going more for Kobe Natural Sweet.

Despite the different personal and professional interests of the group, Kobe Krunch seems to suit everyone's taste. Nutritious, convenient and unique, Kobe Krunch is a snack for everyone.

BAG designer Yael Buencamino

Taste of Spain's fine wine

TIO Pepe is southern Spain's perfection of fine wine.

Tio Pepe's wine has been produced from the area around Jerez and Andalucia. It is best enjoyed in tulip glasses or *copitas* that make its scent sweet and its taste even sweeter.

Tio Pepe is artist Pablo Picasso's choice. He drank no sherry other than Tio Pepe, making the brand's tradition richer by association.

Its chief maker, Manuel Maria Gonzales, has a tie-up with London's Robert Blake Byass.

Rustan's Wines and Spirits Inc. recently inked a partnership with Gonzales and Byass to bring Tio Pepe to Philippine shores.

Rustan's Wines and Spirits Inc. has lined up a number of activities that include free wine tastings.

Flamenco girls will provide entertainment to wine enthusiasts during the bar tours in Metro Manila and other key cities and provinces.

Cook-and-bake classes for May

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts, located on the 3/F Bon Appetit, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong, will conduct a series of classes this month.

May 2—Fondues: Cheese 2 Kinds: Meat, Chicken and Seafood with 6 Savory Fondue Sauces, Fruit with Chocolate Truffle Sauce.

May 5—Fried Chicken Done Right: Austrian, Herb Spiced, Wine Marinated, Cumin Chicken, Milk Marinated, Chili Spice. Salads: Coleslaw and Bacon Potato Dijon. Sauces: Gravies and Other Dipping Sauce.

May 7—(morning class) Basic Baking 1 "My Collection Of The Best": Apple And Sour Cream Pie, Butter Cake, Tiramisu, White Chocolate Banana Cream Pie, Strawberry Shortcake; (afternoon class) Gourmet Filipino Breakfast: Garlic Rib-eye Tapa with Bagoong Omelette and Herbed Fried Rice, Sirloin Herbed Tapa with Scrambled Eggs in Tomato Baskets, Maple Tocino With Cassava Hash, Steamed Marinated Milk Fish Belly Steaks with Rice in Banana Leaves.

May 9—Lasagnes and Canneloni from Scratch: Seafood Lasagne With Basil Bechamel, Chicken Lasagne with Roasted Capsicum Sauce, Prawn Canneloni, Ricotta Cheese Stuffed Canneloni, Chocolate and Mascarpone Lasagne.

May 12—Chinese 101: Hot Prawn and Chicken Salad, King Dao Spare Ribs, Tenderloin Steak Chinese Style, Broccoli with Garlic, Yang Chow Fried Rice, Almond Jelly.

May 14—(Morning class) Basic Baking 2 "My Collection Of The Best": Apple Butterscotch Pie, Pistachio Cake With White Chocolate, The Ultimate Banana Cake, Pound Cake (The Bestest Ever), Blue Berry Cake With White Chocolate Frosting; (afternoon class) All About Foie Gras: Pan Fried Foie Gras Salad with Poached Apples, Foie Gras with Figs and Toast, Grilled Honey Chicken with Fried Foie Gras Rice, Baked Sea Bass with Foiegras, Grilled Steak with Mushrooms and Foie Gras, Foie Gras French Toast with Fruit Compote.

May 16—Easy Gourmet Barbecues and Side Dishes: Chicken Tandoori with Safron Couscous, Persian Kebabs with Persian Rice Pilaf, Portuguese Piri-piri Chicken with Arroz Portuguese, Lamb Kebab with Greek Salad.

Monday and Friday classes start at 9 a.m.; Wednesday morning class, 9 a.m.-12 p.m., afternoon class, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

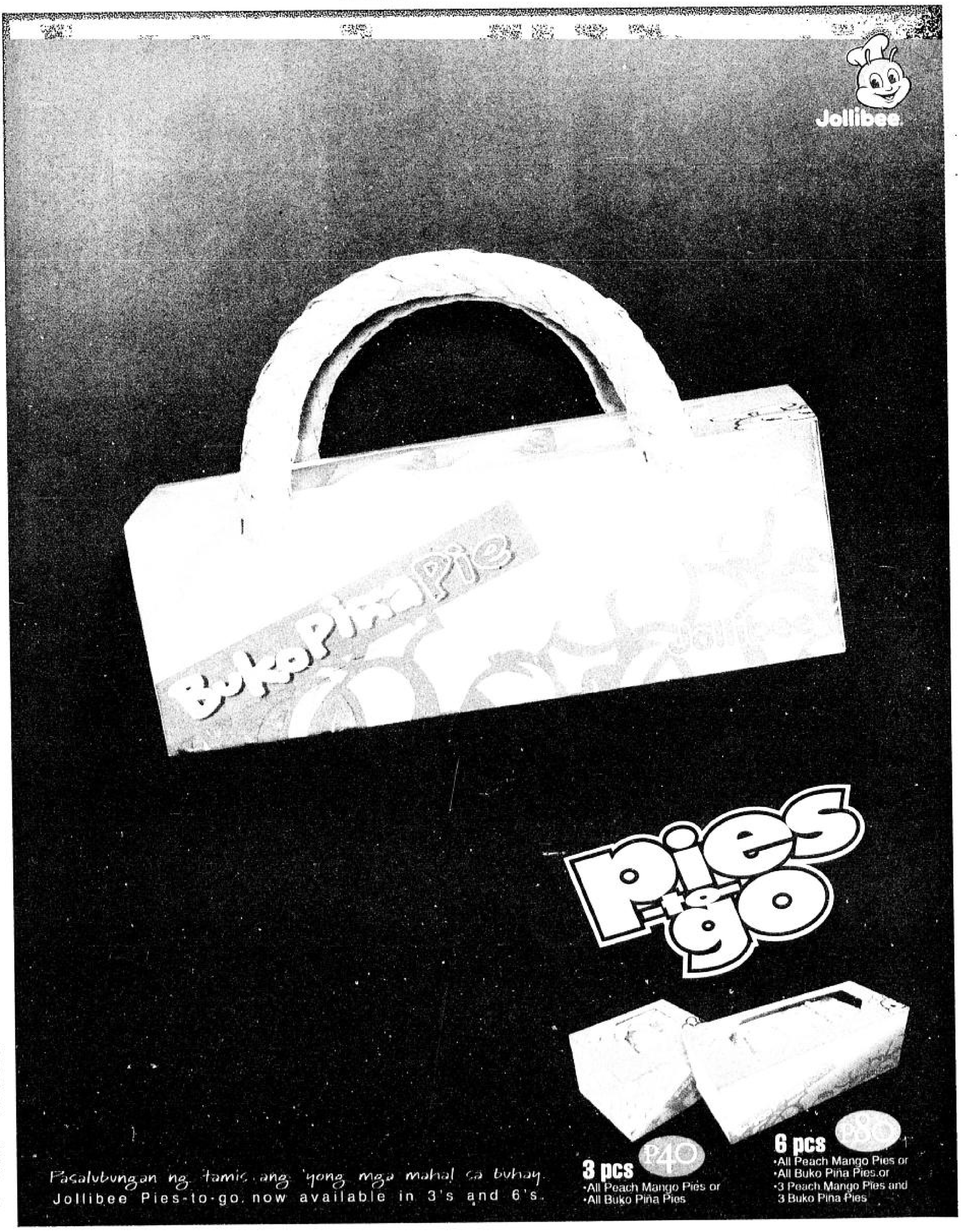
Call Cynthia at 928-9296, 927-3008 or 633-5162.

Kiddie kitchen camp slated for summer

LOOKING for a fun yet productive way for kids to spend summer? Bring your kids to this year's Kids Kitchen Camp by San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center. This activity is open to all youngsters age 8-13 years old who are interested to learn cooking and baking.

All sessions will be held 1-4 p.m. at San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center in Legaspi corner Eagle Streets, Barrio Ugong, Pasig City. Dates for Batch 2 are May 6, 7 and 8.

Call 671-9876 local 402, 405 or 259 to enroll.



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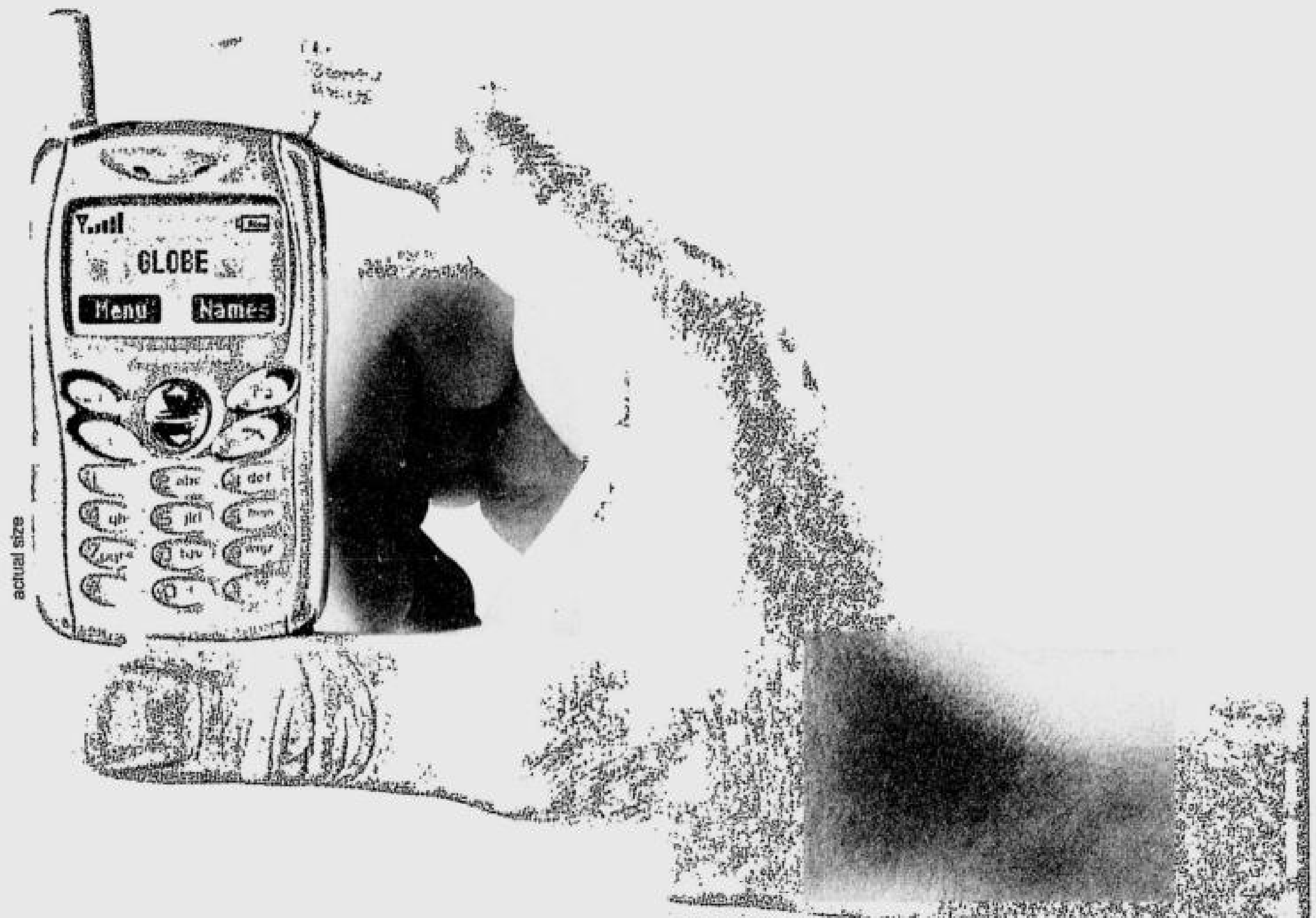

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Panasonic

* According to mobile.review (Eldar Murtazin, February 2003)

Promo period: May 1 to 31, 2003. Per DTI-NCR Permit No.1838, Series of 2003.

For feedback, text us at (0919)880-33-54 or email us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

Of sashimi on virgin islands, wraps, dips, meringues and more

I WOULD like to know what a gifted chef like you enjoys eating and where? Or what have you eaten recently that was out of the ordinary?

MARCO
Tokyo

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

Your question makes me sound like I'm a contestant in some beauty pageant! I hope I'm able to answer it well enough to bag the crown, not to mention the scepter, the cloak and the bouquet!

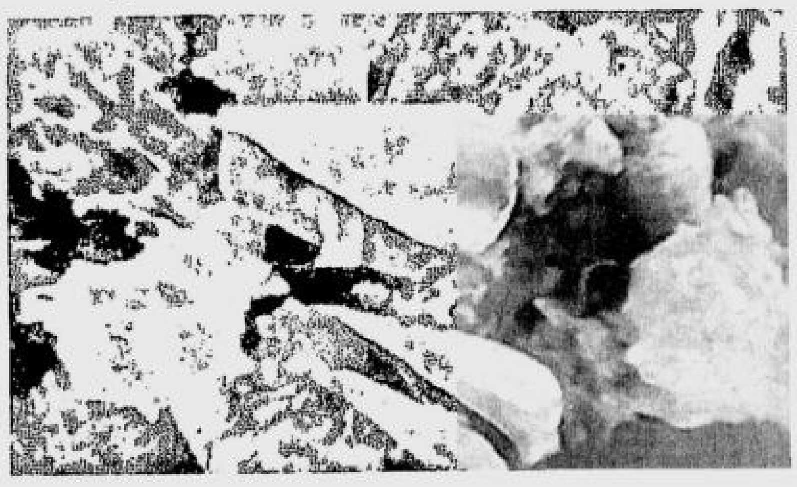
I'd rather answer the second question: you'd be sorely disappointed if I told you that I lived on instant *pancit canton* and 50-percent less-sodium Spam!

We've just come back from a lovely holiday in Cebu, on a private island called Kalanggaman, which is almost by Leyte and fondly called the Republic of Retuya, after its owners Joel and Mona. I've jokingly taken them as my adoptive parents, for no place is as picture perfect! It was an adventure straight out of the "Survivor" series! We had to dive, spear-fish and cast our nets just to make sure that we had something to eat... all right, I'm lying, we asked someone to dive and fish for us.

A wonderful gentleman was with us, Japanese master chef Terasawa, owner of the famed Banri Japanese restaurant in Cebu, where I must say the noodles are excellent.

Terasawa-san patiently waited for the day's catch everyday. Off to work he merrily went with his prized sashimi knife, time and again churning out perfect fillets of fish with great accuracy and precision.

On the other side of the island, the coals were ablaze, and the *lechon* roasting, done island-style (huge amounts of salt were stuffed into the cavity, from which the juices were brushed on the pig for flavor and for crispness. I never enjoyed *lechon* as much as I did this one. Yummy!). The fish and the 5-kg octopus (seasoned with no more than sea salt) were grilled right by the *lechon's* side. But of all the island treats, the textures and flavors of fresh grilled conches and shells served dipped in young coconut vinegar, currently tops my list.



FRESH grilled conches and shells served dipped in young coconut vinegar

Time did fly in Cebu, and I must thank our good friends, Jun-jun Osmeña (who chased the piglet around the island, just to make sure that *lechon* was served) and Dan for all the wonderful memories!

I love cooking, too, but there are some dishes I'd like to eat but I don't know how to cook them, like fresh *lumpia*. I really love it no matter what the filling. But until now I keep wondering how the wrapper is prepared. My mom told me its main ingredient is egg white. I would really appreciate it if you could share with me your fresh *lumpia* recipe.

KARENE

Hope you find this recipe to your liking. You can substitute the *ubod* with bean sprouts or just about anything that tickles your fancy.

The wrapper may take some time to perfect so be patient. If it doesn't turn out as expected the first time, just keep cooking and make sure you have friends around to eat it just the same!

Fresh Lumpia Wrapper

1 c flour (or ½ c cornstarch and ½ c flour; this proportion makes a thinner batter)
1 egg
1 c water

Combine ingredients in a bowl and stir until smooth. Let rest for an hour. Lightly grease a non-stick skillet. When

OF SASHIMI D4

GLORIA MARIS
SHARK'S FIN RESTAURANT
GREENBELT 2

Set Menu for 6
- 1/2 Peking Duck- 2 Ways
- Fish Lip Soup
- Baked Prawns w/ Superior Sauce & Fried Noodle
- Steamed Fish Fillet w/ Garlic
- Clams with Seafood & Wintermelon
- Fried Beancurd with Salt & Pepper
- Minced Duck with Lettuce
- Garlic Fried Rice
- Mango Sago
- Butchi

~~Before P 3,880~~ Now: P 1,680

Set Menu for 12
- Assorted Cold Cuts Combination
- Taro Seafood Pie with Bacon Roll
- Dotted Lapu-Lapu Fillet & Bamboo Fungus with M. Wintermelon Soup
- Pata Tim with Bread
- Sweet and Sour Lapu-Lapu Fillet
- Crispy Fried Chicken
- Steamed Crabs
- Birthday Noodles or Fried Rice
- Mango Sago
- Butchi

Before ~~P 7,800~~ Now: P 4,800

Set Menu for 12
- Suckling Pig Cold Cuts Combination
- Lobster Mango Roll
- Dotted Lapu-Lapu Fillet with Shark's Fin Soup
- Peking Duck 2 Ways
- Black Mushroom with Local Abalone & Veg
- Steamed Lapu-Lapu
- Minced Duck with Lettuce
- Fried Crabs with Salt & Pepper
- Birthday Noodles or Fried Rice
- Mango Sago & Butchi

Before ~~P 9,800~~ Now: P 7,380

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1 Whole Peking Duck 2 Ways
(1st Way) Skinning
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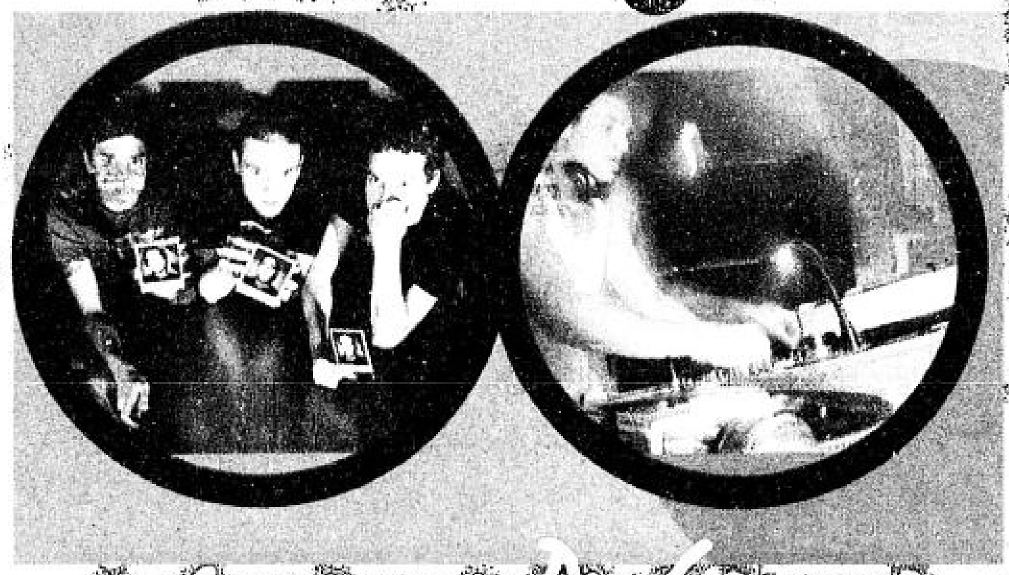

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BIGFISH

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Of sashimi on virgin islands, wraps, dips, meringues and more

From page D1

skillet is hot, pour about ¼ cup of the batter (the quantity of the batter will depend on how thin you want the wrapper to be). When the sides start to pull away from the pan, lift wrapper out carefully with a spatula.

Lumpia Sauce

4 tbsp cornstarch
1/3 c brown sugar
1/3 c soy sauce
2 tbsp vinegar
1 c water
¼ c garlic, crushed

Mix cornstarch, sugar, soy sauce, vinegar, garlic and water. Cook until thick over low heat, stirring constantly. Season to taste with salt, pepper and sugar.

Fresh Lumpia

4 cloves garlic, crushed
1 small onion, diced
1 c shrimps, deveined and cut into small pieces
¼ c chicken breasts, pounded and thinly sliced
2 c *ubod*, thinly sliced
1 tsp salt
1 tsp ground pepper
2 tsp sugar
10 lettuce leaves (preferably *letsugas Tagalog*)

In a wok, saute garlic, onion and the chicken breast. When the chicken has changed color, add the shrimps. Add the *ubod*, season with sugar, salt and pepper to taste, and cook for about 3 minutes. Drain well. On a plate, lay wrapper flat, put a lettuce leaf, and two tablespoons of the filling. Fold the edges of the wrapper and roll. Serve with *lumpia* sauce, crushed garlic and pounded peanuts.

What kind of basil is best for making pesto and, since you're at it, could you print a recipe of pesto as well? Can you also send your baking classes schedule? I really want to learn the basics of baking, not a class for memorizing recipes.

MARTIN ONGKEKO

Check for my class schedules elsewhere in this issue of Lifestyle. I, too, strongly believe that cooking and baking should not be rigorous, precise and recipe-bound. Takes all the fun away. Let cooking be a form of self expression. What you cook should reflect your character.

Sweet basil is best for pesto. Here's a recipe—cook on!

Pesto

3 large garlic cloves
½ c pine nuts or ¼ c walnuts (though pine nuts is originally used for pesto, I like the nuttiness that walnuts lend to my pesto)
2/3 c freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1 tsp salt
½ tsp freshly cracked black pepper
3 c fresh basil leaves, use sweet basil
2/3 c extra-virgin olive oil

In a food processor, put garlic and finely chop. Add nuts, cheese, salt, pepper and basil, then process until finely chopped. Add oil, blending until incorporated.

Do you have a recipe for spinach dip (like the one they serve at Cibo)? My daughter loves it and while I've tried bringing home some, I've found that it doesn't keep well. I'd like to make it at home so it's always served fresh.

Sorry, I haven't tasted the one of Cibo, but just the same, this is my spinach dip recipe. Hope your daughter enjoys it as much!

Spinach Dip

10-oz frozen spinach, blanched and squeezed dry, chopped fine
2 tbsp chopped chives
2 tbsp chopped parsley
1½ c sour cream
2 tsp onion powder
2 tsp garlic powder
2 tsp Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce
½ c mayonnaise
salt and pepper to taste
1 pack onion soup mix (optional)
1 round loaf of farmer's or sourdough bread

Mix ingredients well. Chill dip at least two hours. Hollow out a round bread loaf and fill with the dip. Cut the middle section of the bread into squares and place around the dip instead of crackers. Dip may be served with vegetable sticks as well. If using onion soup mix cut onion and garlic powder to 1 tsp and season with salt sparingly.

I just read your recipe for *yema* balls and I think I would like to try it. Do you also have a recipe for meringue, or any other recipe that would make use of the egg whites? Thank you so much!

KATHERINE

This is my favorite meringue recipe. We used to have this all the time with tea during our cooking classes held at Princess Marie Blanche de Broglie's residence in Paris. We serve this with a citrus dip which is excellent!

Meringue

3 large egg whites
¾ c sugar

Preheat oven to 200°F. Grease and flour a large baking sheet, knocking off excess flour. I would use a *silpat* for this; makes life a lot easier. In a bowl with an electric mixer, beat whites until they hold soft peaks. Gradually add sugar; beat until stiff peaks and glossy. With a piping bag, pipe rosettes on baking sheet or use a teaspoon and drop heaping teaspoons of meringue. Bake for 45 minutes. Turn oven off and leave meringues in oven 1 hour more.

Citrus Dip

½ c lemon juice
zest of 3 lemons
¾ c sugar
3 eggs
½ c butter

In a double boiler, whisk together zest, juice, sugar, eggs and butter. Cook mixture, whisking until thick and smooth. Chill and serve with meringue.

E-mail the author at reggie1@skyinet.net

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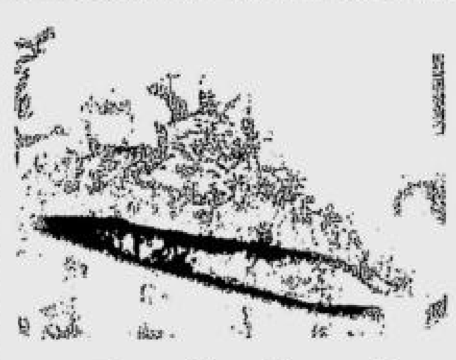

Buckwheat crêpes are here

THE FRENCH Baker has added buckwheat flour crêpes to its line of delightful products.

Buckwheat flour is the core ingredient of crêpes and galettes in Brittany. Introduced in the 12th century by crusaders riding back from the Middle East, buckwheat thrived on the desolate Breton moors.

Buckwheat galettes used to be cooked in a frying pan on one side only. They were tender and could be cut in narrow ribbons to thicken soups as well as covered with eggs, or any other local produce.

The batter of the crispier buckwheat crêpes batter was whipped "with the fist," and the crêpes were then cooked on both sides on twin flat stones or cast iron.

The original ingredients for batter are buckwheat flour, water and sometimes apple cider. Once combined, add milk, melted butter and a hint of white flour to improve texture and taste.

For serving, The French Baker suggests strawberry preserves with whipped cream or mandarin orange slices with peaches and fruity syrup.

The French Baker's buckwheat crêpes are available at all of its 25 stores in Metro Manila, Pampanga and Metro Cebu.

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2003
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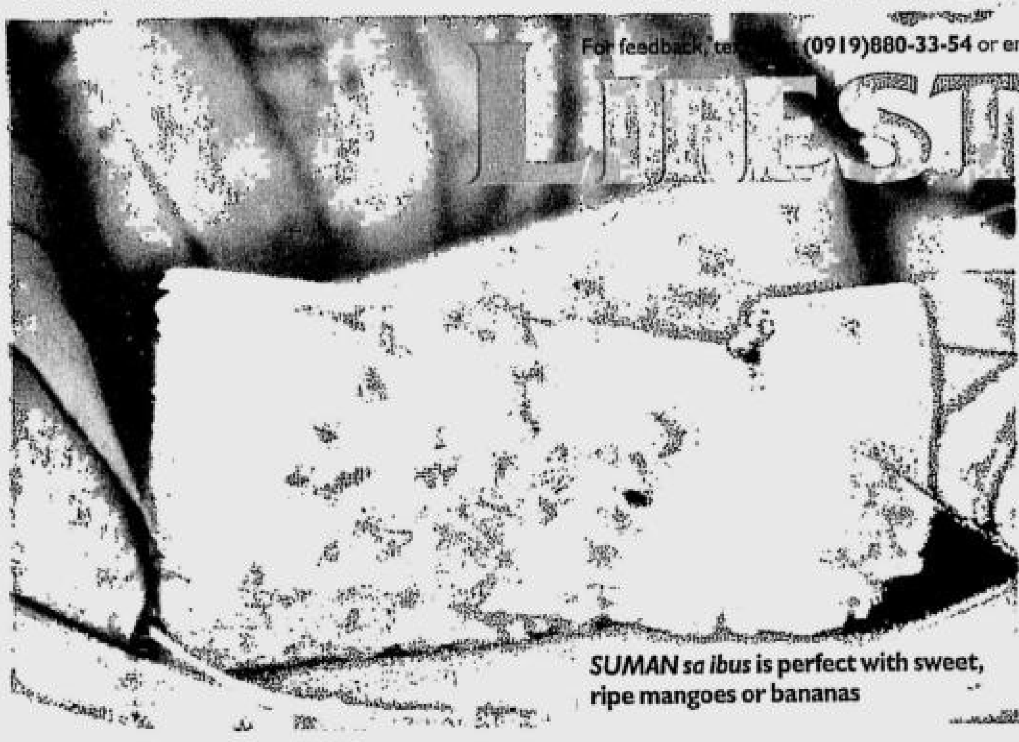

SUMAN sa ibus is perfect with sweet, ripe mangoes or bananas

Appetizing Aklan

SUMAN latik is a cut above the rest because of its topping of *bukayo*

Boneless 'bangus,' 'binakol' and rice cakes are best offerings

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Mike Alquinto

OUR quick visit to Aklan, which was made possible by the local government of Aklan and South East Asian Airlines (Seair), brought us to Aklan's sole boneless *bangus* manufacturer, Sazon's Fishfarm Corporation in Numancia.

Aklan's Best Boneless Bangus comes in seven marinated flavors—smoked, barbecue, calamansi, honey, garlic, vinegar and lemon grass. Roberto Sazon Sr. is the man behind this successful endeavor. He supplies the demand within the province, as well as in Metro Manila, Cebu, Iloilo and other nearby provinces. Mostly, "balikbayans" or their relatives buy Sazon's products, which make for great *pasalubong*.

Sazon's *bangus* is completely boneless, yet well-shaped, the fat belly intact.

"Aklan is very much abundant in *bangus* because of the progress in fish farming technology," said Sazon, who also owns several fishponds in Aklan. Sazon started the business three years ago with the purpose of satisfying the craving for boneless *daing na bangus* of locals and foreigners who visit the famous white beach in Boracay.

"There was a demand to have a ready-to-cook, deboned and flavored *bangus*. I saw the opportunity and grabbed it," he claimed.

According to Sazon, from the fish pens to the processing plant the pieces of *bangus* are eviscerated and washed with potable water to remove blood, filth, and some microorganisms and enzymes from the fish. The *bangus* is then deboned at the Sazon plant (would you believe each has approximately 590 to 619 bones?). About 150 kilos of *bangus* are deboned each day. After deboning, flavor is added to the *bangus* by soaking it in a particular marinade for a definite length of time. The marinated fish is then hygienically vacuum packed and frozen.

"The packed *bangus* is then delivered to the outlet stores in just few hours," he says. A kilo of boneless *bangus* is sold at P160-P170.

Native to the place

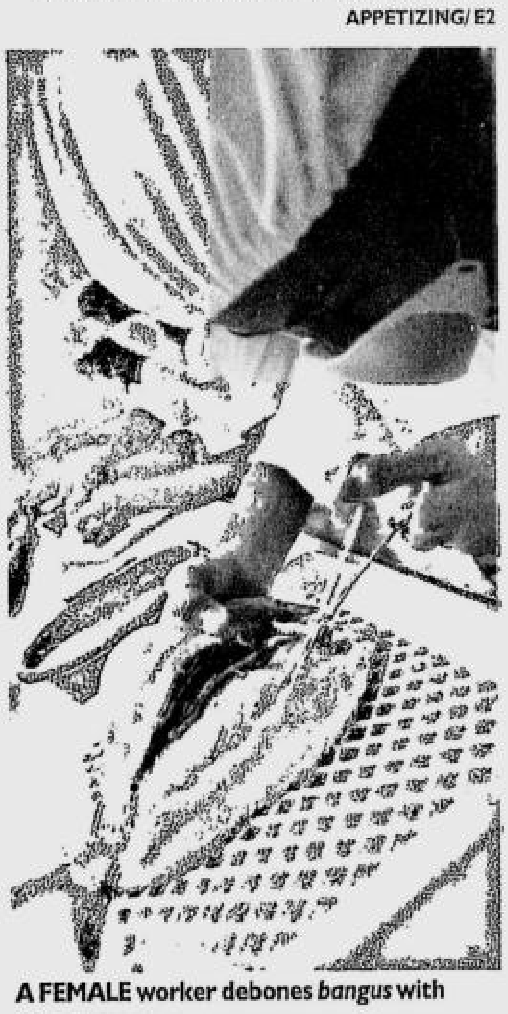
A trip to Aklan is incomplete if you don't get to savor *inasal*, *ubod ng nipa*, *binakol*, *bucarillo*, and *suwahi na hipon*, among other specialities of the place.

The Aklanons' chicken *binakol* is made from lemon grass, coconut flesh, coconut water and native chicken, uniquely cooked in young bamboo.

Aklanons like sour accompaniments to their food, such as chopped green mangoes mixed with pickled shredded papaya (achara) and pimiento.

Each region in this country has its own ver-

APPETIZING/E2


A FEMALE worker debones *bangus* with tweezers.

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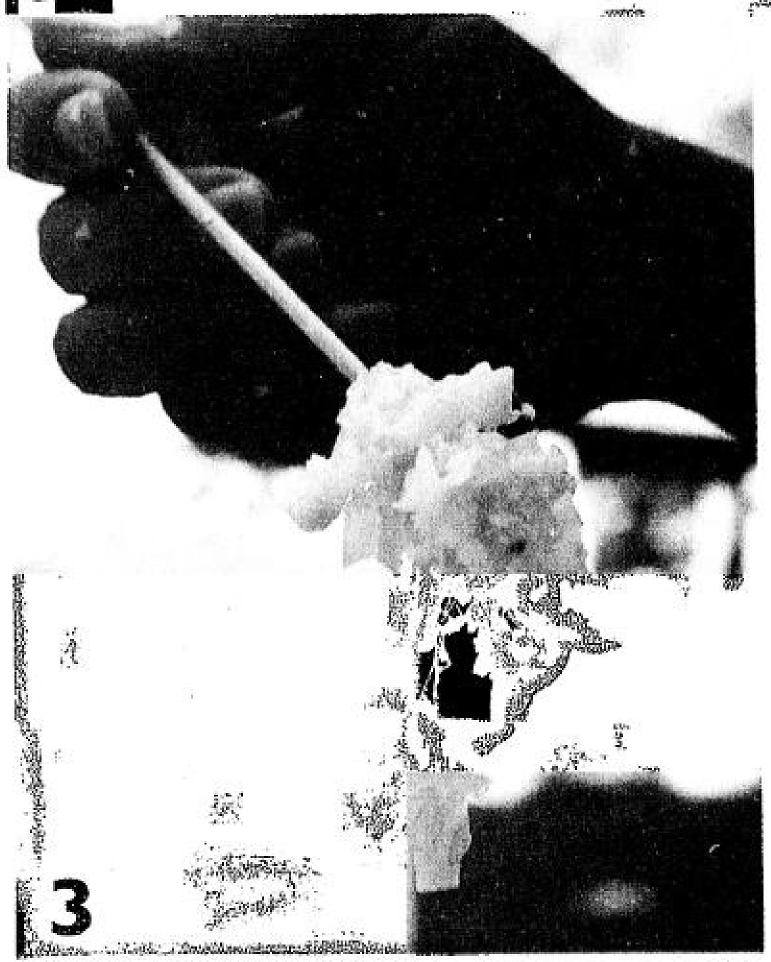
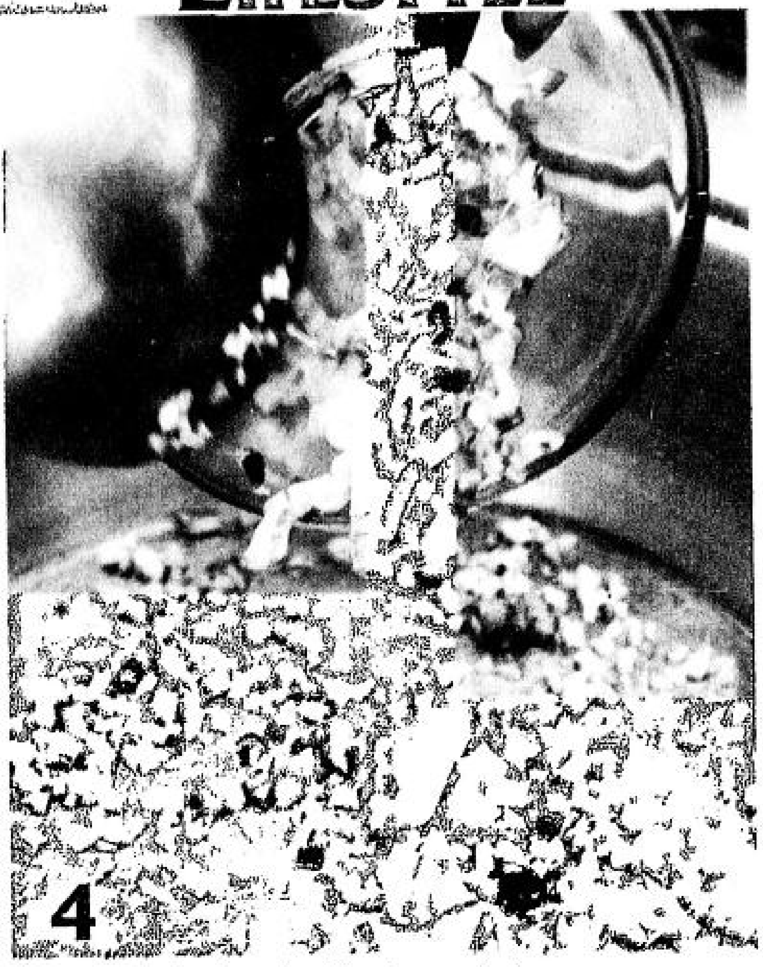


3

REMOVE the thread-like sap by stirring the *ubad* with barbecue stick. Get as much of the sap as you can. Set aside.



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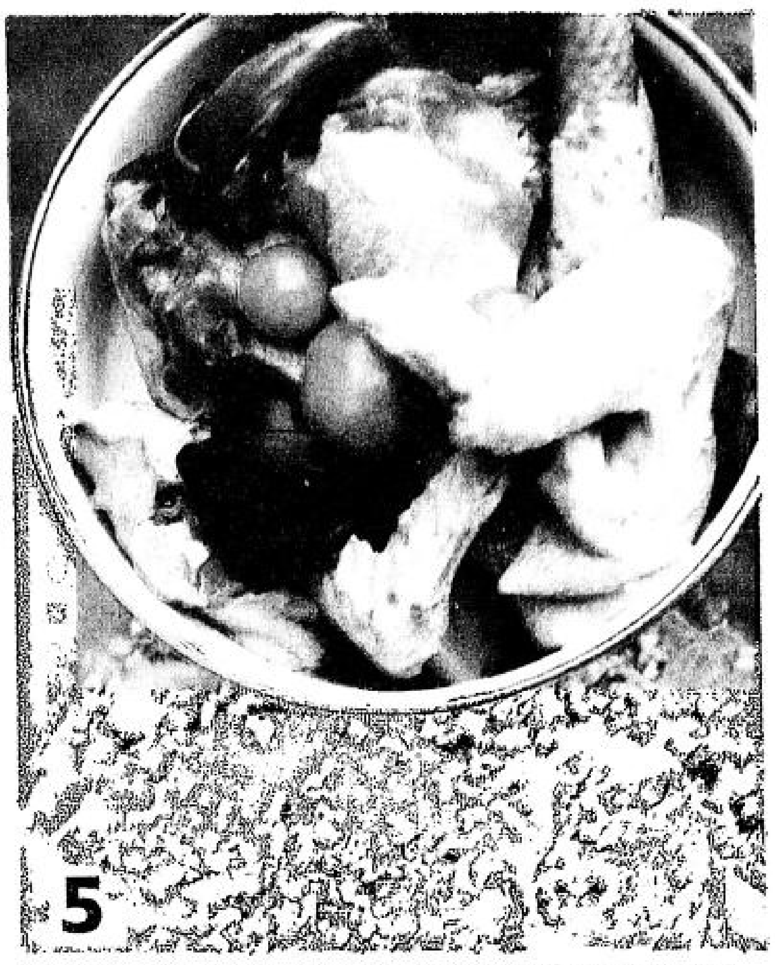
IN a pan, add oil and sauté garlic, ginger and onion.



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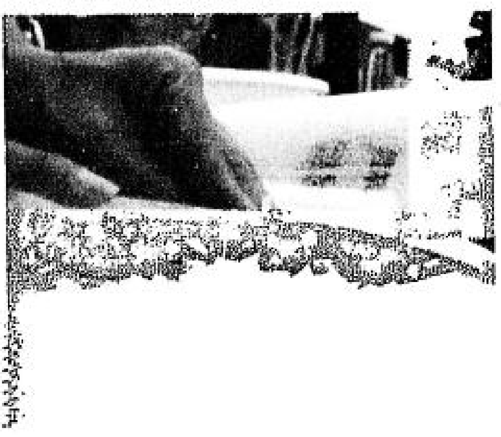
ADD chicken and lemon grass. Add coconut milk (second squeeze). Stir well. Simmer until chicken is tender.

2

SQUEEZE and drain well.



1

FINELY chop *ubad* and soak in water with salt.

Simple pleasure for people in RP's Mardi Gras land

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Mike Alquinto

THE AKLANONS are generally known to be fun-loving and gracious. The annual and popular Ati-atihan is a clear manifestation of the Aklanons' penchant for revelry.

When it comes to food, however, Aklanons prefer simple, down-to-earth yet flavorful dishes.

The Inubarang Manok is one of the dishes Aklan takes pride in. It is a hearty mix of native chicken and banana *ubad*, the core or pith of the banana plant (as *ubod* is to the coconut), flavored with pure coconut milk and seasoned with lemon grass (*tanglad*) ginger, garlic, onion and salt.

The dish is similar to the *tinola* of the Tagalogs except for the use of *kakang-gata*.

"Aklanons use coconut milk in most of their cooking, be it chicken, pork or seafood," says 75-year-old Benny Miraflores, a retired public school teacher and mother of Aklan Gov. Florencio Miraflores. "*Inubarang manok* is our dish for all occasions."

Ubad makes *inubarang manok* a whole lot different from other chicken soup dishes. It gives *inubarang manok* a distinct texture and makes the dish crunchy. The flavors of lemon grass, garlic, ginger and onions also enrich the dish's thick coconut sauce.

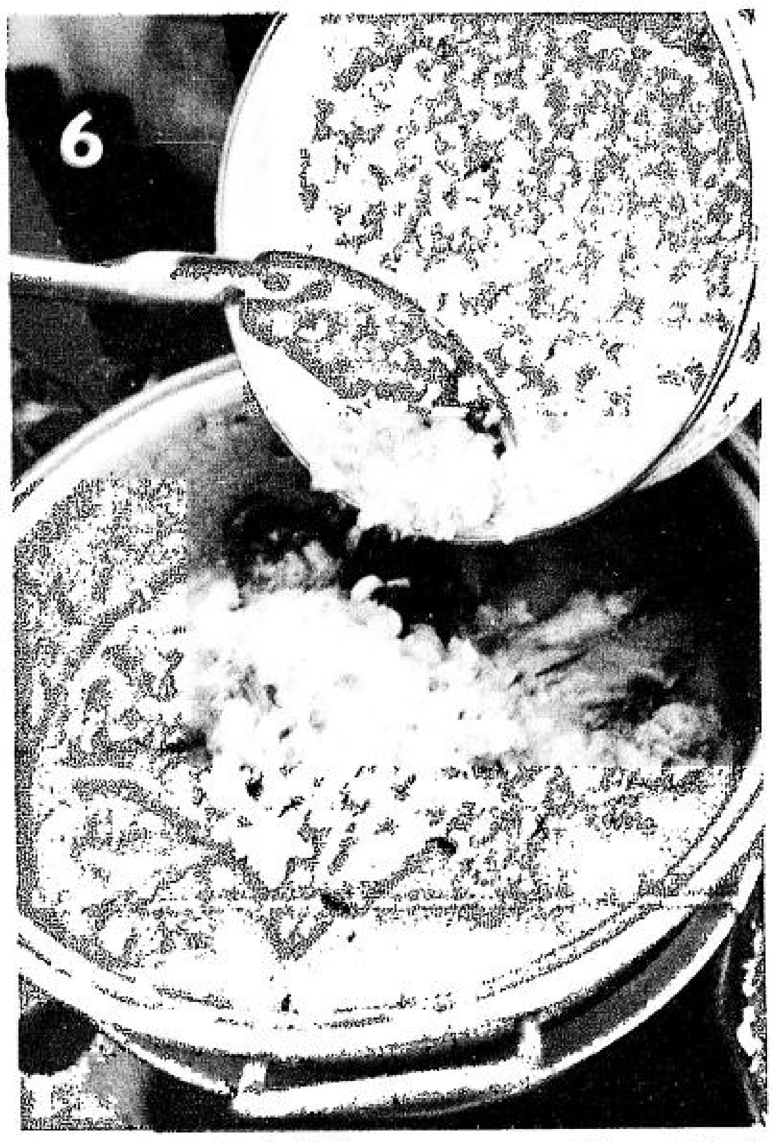
While *inubarang manok* is relatively easy to make, however, the availability of *ubad* can be a bit of a problem. "We only use *saba* or *botohan* banana variety, not *latundan* or *lakatan* because it is quite tough," says Miraflores. In Aklan, *ubad* is not sold in the market since almost every household has banana plants. In Manila, orders for *ubad* can only be made in selected markets.

STEP BY STEP

Inubarang Manok

1 dressed chicken cut into pieces
1 banana trunk (*saba* or *botohan*) *ubad*
1 c coconut milk (*kakang gata*)
4 c coconut milk (second squeeze)
lemon grass
garlic, chopped
ginger, chopped
onions, chopped
salt to taste
cooking oil
onions springs, chopped

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph



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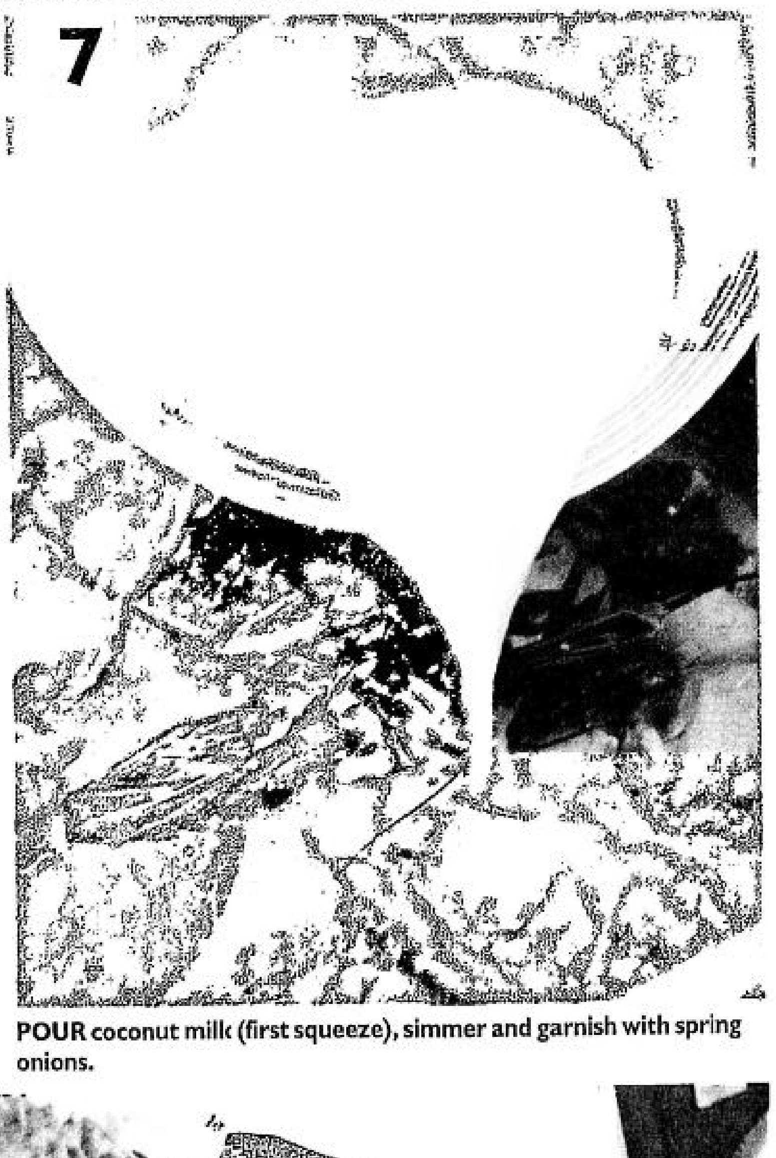
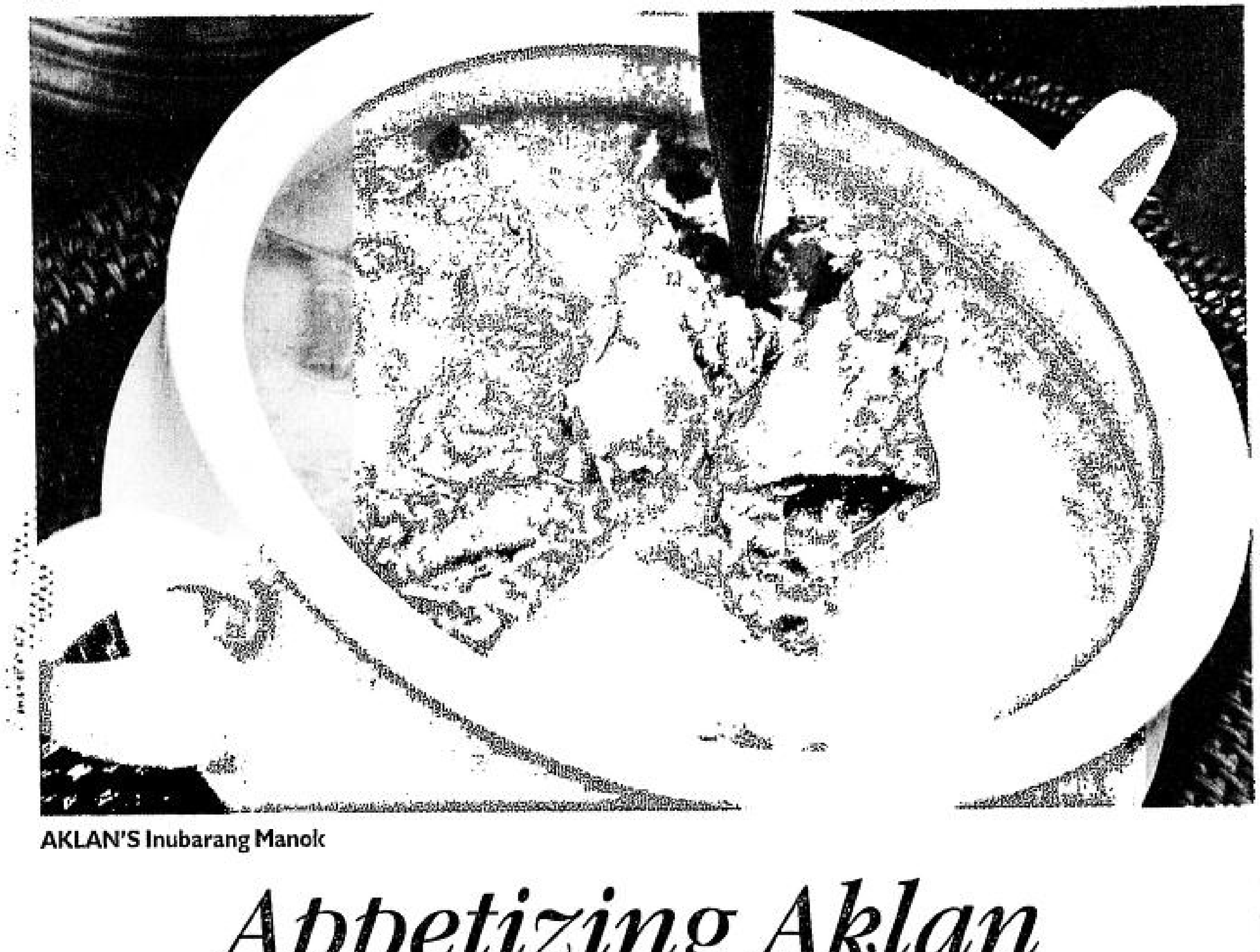
ADD *ubad*. Boil and wait till it becomes transparent. Season with salt.



7

POUR coconut milk (first squeeze), simmer and garnish with spring onions.

'Inubarang manok' is not an undressed chicken dish



AKLAN'S Inubarang Manok

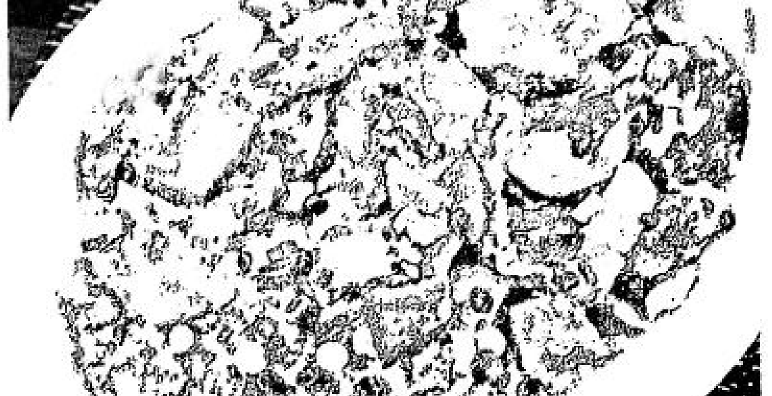
Appetizing Aklan

From page E1

sion of the rice cake and Aklan's contribution to this gallery is its *suman latik*, which is sweet and tender, made of glutinous rice mixed with sugar and wrapped in banana leaves like other *suman* but is a cut above the rest because of its topping of *bukayo* or grated coconut cooked with sugar.

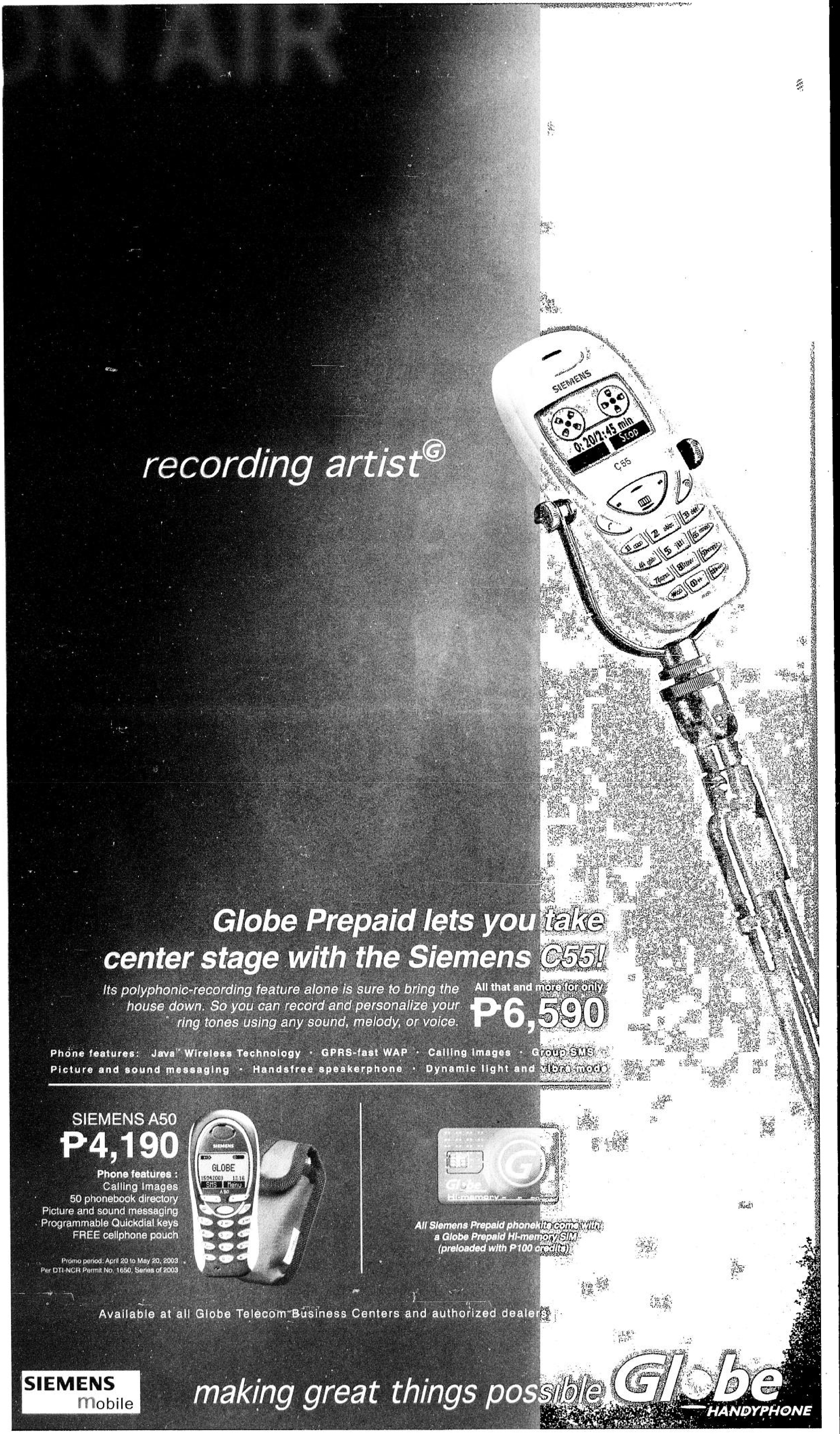
The Kalibo public market is a veritable paradise for anyone with a sweet tooth because every corner turns up a variation of *kakanin*: *suman sa ibus*, *espasol* in smooth-rounded shape, *bicho-bicho*, *biko*, *bibingka*, *puto*. *Suman sa ibus*, wrapped in ribbed white palm sheath, is perfect with ripe golden mangoes or banana.

Seair has daily hourly flights to Caticlan, which is one hour away from Kalibo, Aklan and a 25-minute boat ride to Boracay.



UBOD ng nipa

AKLAN'S Best Boneless Bangus comes in seven marinated flavors—smoked, barbecue, calamansi, honey, garlic, vinegar and lemon grass.



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LIFESTYLE
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Comfort food like Mom used to make

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

IT is almost Mother's Day and we would like to reintroduce recipes that our mothers used to prepare for our everyday meals. These recipes are considered comfort food, perking us up on rainy days or when we are feeling a little bit under the weather. Mother's cooking also brings back memories of how she took care of us when we were younger. Prepare the recipes, relive the memories and honor thy mother. Advanced Happy Mothers Day to all!

Korean Spareribs

1 kg pork ribs or belly, sliced into 2"lengths
1 tbsp well-pounded garlic
1 tbsp finely minced ginger
¼ c white sugar
freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp rice wine
2 c water
additional 2 c water for stewing
2 tsp cornstarch
2 tsp sesame oil
1 tsp bottled chili garlic sauce
1 tbsp sesame seeds
½ c red bell pepper sliced into strips
½ c chopped leeks or spring onions

In a large stockpot or wok, combine pork, garlic, ginger, sugar, pepper, soy sauce, rice wine and 2 cups of water. Place over medium heat and cover. Allow to boil briefly, and then simmer until the pork is tender. Add the remaining 2 cups of water ½ a cup at a time as needed. Do not attempt to add the additional 2 cups water at one time to maintain the texture of the sauce.

In a small bowl, combine the cornstarch together with the sesame oil and the chili garlic sauce. As soon as the pork is tender, pour in the cornstarch solution. Quickly stir in sesame seeds, bell pepper strips and leeks. Allow to cook at low heat for 5 minutes more to allow the vegetables to wilt a bit.

Note: 1 whole chicken cut into serving pieces and 1 kg beef ribs/cubes may also be used.

Almond Jelly with Fresh Fruits

Almond Jelly:
1 c full cream evaporated milk
1 c water
2 tbsp unflavored gelatin
½ cup white sugar
1 tsp almond extract
Simple syrup:
1 c white sugar
3 c water
Fruits :
Well-drained canned pineapple chunks
Fresh mango, scooped into balls
Maraschino cherries, quartered

In a saucepan, combine milk, water, gelatin, sugar and flavoring. Let stand for 5 minutes. Cook over low heat, stirring continuously, until both sugar and gelatin granules have dissolved completely. Pour into a rectangular glass or ceramic dish and refrigerate until firm. Cut into cubes. Keep chilled until ready to use.

To prepare the syrup, simply boil sugar and water together until sugar has dissolved completely. Let cool completely. Keep refrigerated.

When ready to serve, combine chilled syrup, prepared fruits and cubed gelatin in a punch bowl. Serve with crushed ice, if desired.

Cassava Bibingka

4 c grated cassava
1 coconut, grated
1½ c warm water
¼ c melted butter
3 whole eggs, graded extra large
2 c white sugar
1 tsp fine salt
½ tsp pure vanilla extract
wilted banana leaves
Caramel topping:
300-ml can condensed milk
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
2 egg yolks
1 c *kesong puti*
1 c grated cheese

Line the bottom of an oven-proof dish with wilted banana leaves. Set aside.

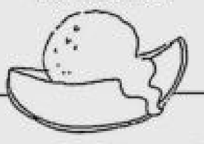
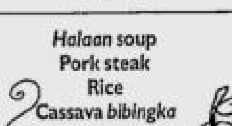
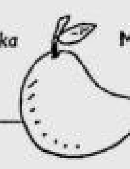
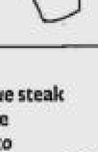
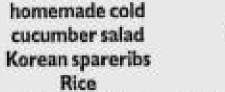
In a large bowl, combine warm water and grated coconut. Mix well, then squeeze out the milk. You should have a total of 2 cups coconut milk. If the amount is not adequate, add some water.

In another mixing bowl, combine the ingredients for the *bibingka*. Mix well with a rubber scraper. Pour into the prepared baking pan and bake at 350°F for 1 hour.

In a thick saucepan, combine condensed milk, flour and egg yolks. Mix well and cook over low heat until it thickens. Pour over baked *bibingka* and spread from end to end. Top with native cheese and grated quick-melt cheese.

Increase the oven temperature to 375°F. Bake *bibingka* with the topping for 20-25 minutes more or until the caramel has set.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking classes at Dorothy's Cooking School at 48 Third St., New Manila, QC. Call 721-7735.

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	Omelet with onions Hotdog Toasted bread Butter and fruit jam Coffee, hot chocolate, milk or fruit juice	Menudo Rice Melon à la mode 	Chicken *tinola* with green papaya and *sili* leaves Rice Chilled canned pineapple tidbits
TUESDAY	Oatmeal with cocoa *Ensaymada* Butter and fruit jam Coffee or fruit juice	Instant crab and corn soup Sweet and sour fish Rice Almond jelly	Roast turbo chicken Vegetable chopsuey Rice Chilled ripe mango
WEDNESDAY	Garlic rice Leftover *adobo* Fried egg, sunny side up Coffee, hot chocolate or milk Fresh mango	*Sinigang na bangus* Green mango salad Rice *Leche flan* 	Green salad with Thousand Island dressing Baked spaghetti Coffee jelly with ice cream
THURSDAY	Cereal with milk Pork and beans Hot *pan de sal* Butter and fruit jam Hot chocolate, coffee or milk 	*Halaan* soup Pork steak Rice Cassava *bibingka*	*Pancit bihon guisado* *Embutido* Rice Mango à la mode 
FRIDAY	Hotcake Pan-grilled ham or Spam Butter and fruit jam Hot chocolate, coffee or milk Papaya shake	Chicken *afritada* Rice Chilled mango juice with *sago* bits 	Pot roast Boiled string beans Creamy potato salad Blueberry cheesecake
SATURDAY	French toast with orange honey and butter Crispy honey-cured bacon Coffee, milk or hot chocolate Fresh fruit cocktail	*Bulalo* Pan-grilled *tanigue* steak *Pandan* rice Chilled *buko* 	Instant *miso* soup Fish and vegetable Tempura Rice Ice cream
SUNDAY	Garlic rice *Longganiza* Fried egg Hot chocolate, coffee or milk Chilled fresh pineapple and papaya 	Store-bought *kimchi* or homemade cold cucumber salad Korean spareribs Rice Buko sherbet 	Restaurant-style steamed fish Sautéed baby *bokchoy* with oyster sauce Rice Canned peaches in syrup with crushed ice

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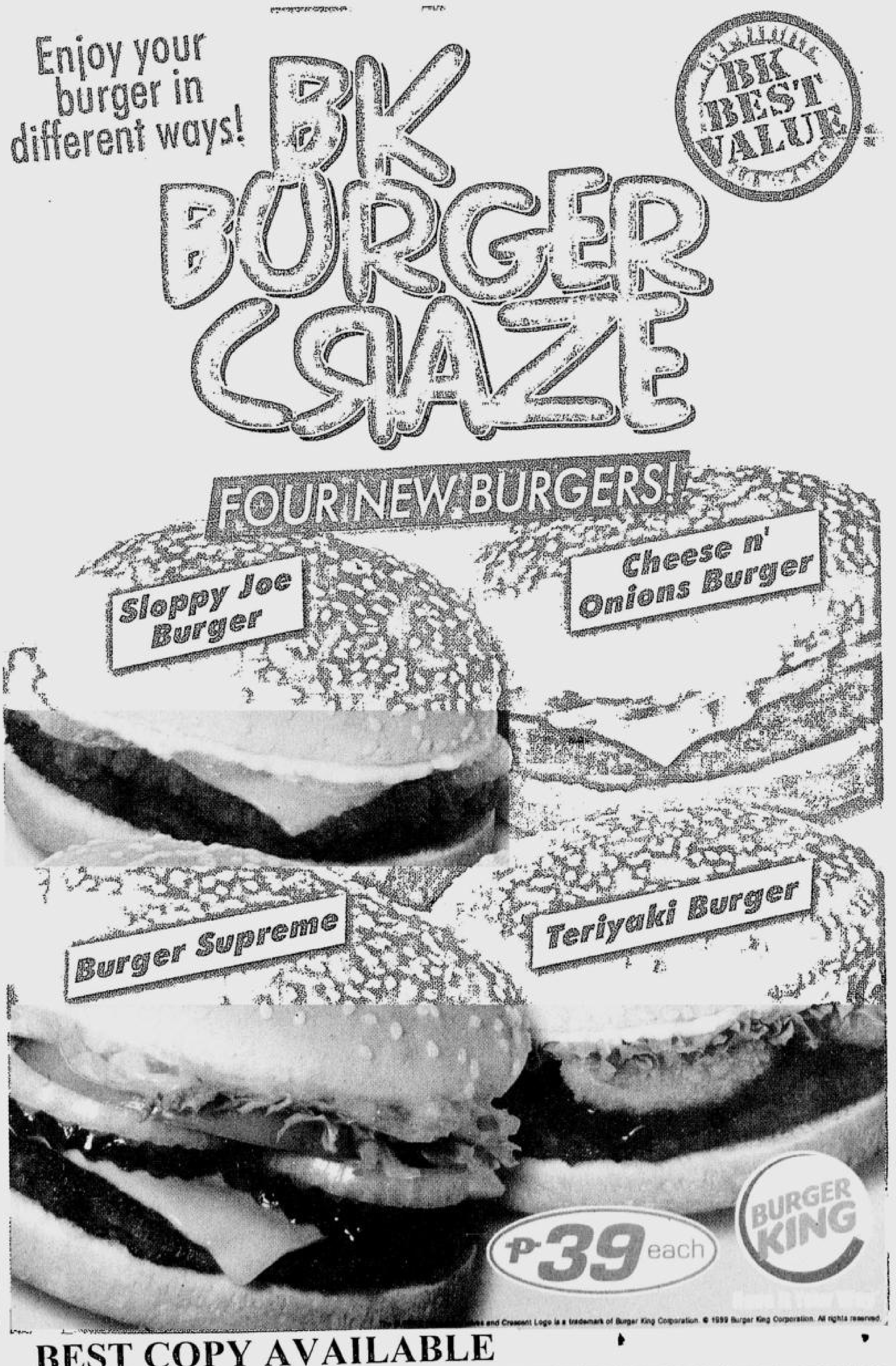

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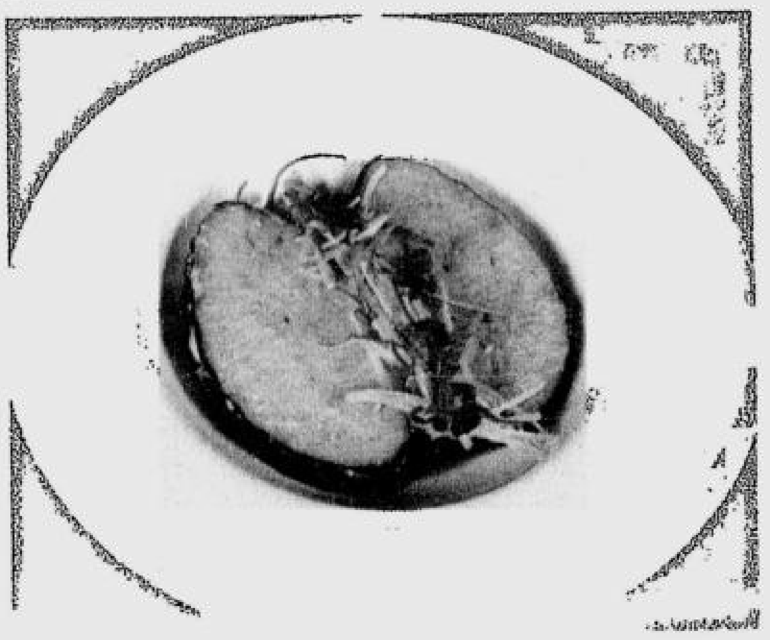
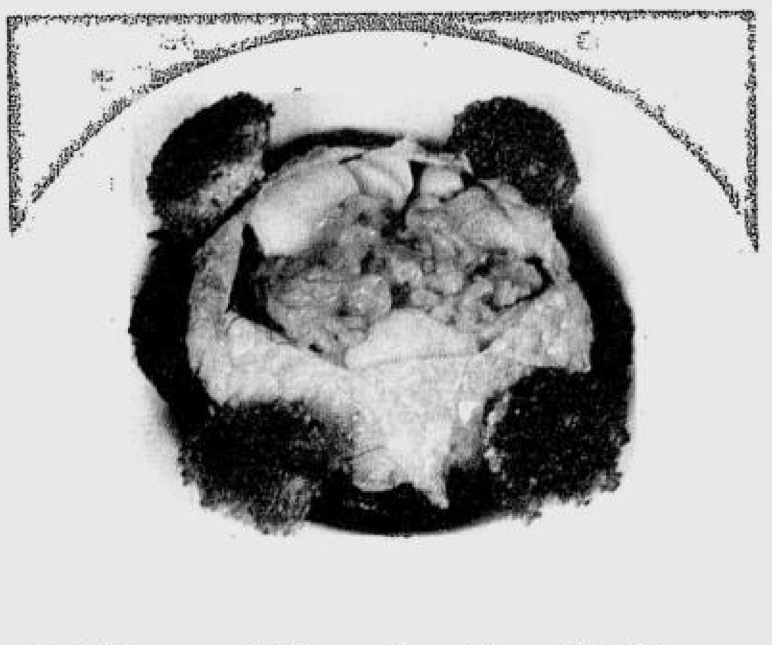
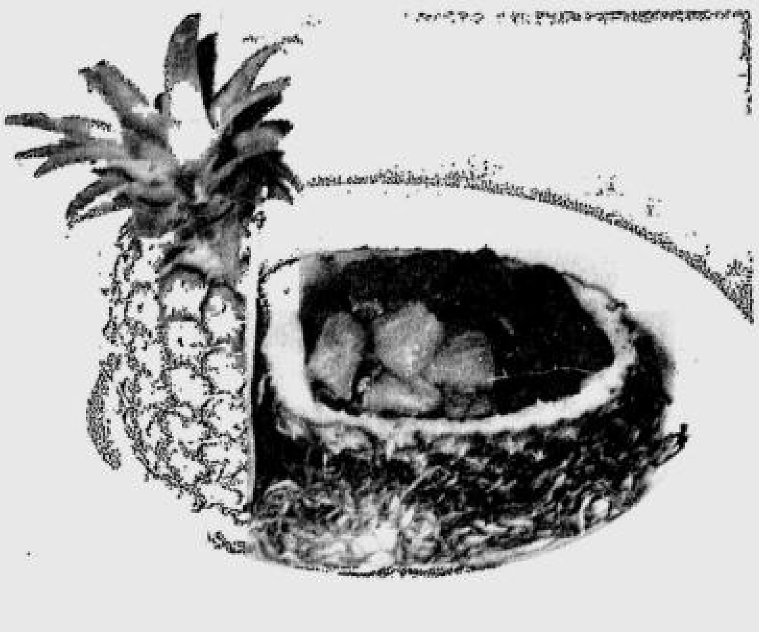


PAN-FRIED Cod Fish in Soya Sauce



BRAISED Bouquet of Mushrooms, Fungus Wrapped in Dried Beancurd Skin



SAUTÉED Sliced Vegetarian Pork with Pineapple and Bell Pepper served in a whole pineapple

With a menu like this, no one has to miss the meat

By Jasmine W. Payo

AS more restaurants offer innovative vegetarian cuisine, it's no longer difficult to find tasty veggie treats. From veggie pork to veggie chicken to veggie fish, most vegetarian food now simulate the flavor, form and texture of meat and fish. In fact, they're so well-prepared it's often difficult to tell them apart from the real thing.

"Most of the vegetarian food that we have now would want to give the experience that you're also eating meat. Like the vegetarian ham, it looks and tastes like ham. And the fish, you wouldn't know that it's not fish because it looks and tastes like real fish. It's like eating regular food," says Tin Hau manager Chung Zai Lim Zion.

Tin Hau, Mandarin Oriental Manila's premier Chinese restaurant, will soon treat local diners to these meatless meals in their Vegetarian Delight food promotion. "This is now our second run. When we had it the first time, people asked when we would have it again. So now we're bringing it back," says Chung.

Monkey head

Sze Chuan chef Sung Bing and executive Chinese chef Andy Chan have whipped up more than a dozen vegetarian creations. Promising less fat, salt and sugar in their dishes, they have come up with appetizers such as Deep-fried Black Mushroom with Sesame (P380), Spinach and Vegetable Dumplings (P150) and Deep-fried Seaweed Rolls with Glutinous Rice and Mashed Potatoes (P300).

For the main course, Chung recommends the Braised Bouquet of Mushrooms, Fungus Wrapped in Dried Beancurd Skin (small, P420; medium, P630; large, P840). "This is one of our favorites because you get different kinds of mushroom and fungus. They're all in one dish and it's delicious," he says.

Also among the manager's choices are the Steamed Vegetarian Abalone and Ham with Mushroom "Unicorn" Style (small P480; medium P720; large P960); and the Double Boiled Monkey Head, Bamboo Pith, Yellow Fungus and Black Mushroom (P200 per person).

SZE Chuan chef Sung Bing, Tin Hau manager Chung Zai Lim Zion and executive Chinese chef Andy Chan

Tin Hau at the Mandarin Oriental offers veggie treats that can fool even staunch carnivores

The Monkey Head makes you do a double take on the menu, but Chung explains, "The Monkey Head is a type of mushroom. It's very expensive. But here we're offering it cheap so people should sample it."

Other must-trys are the "fish dishes" such as the Pan-fried Cod Fish in Soya Sauce (small P480; medium P720; large P906) and the Deep-fried Taro Fish with Sweet and Sour Sauce (small P380; medium P570; large P760).

Better than meat

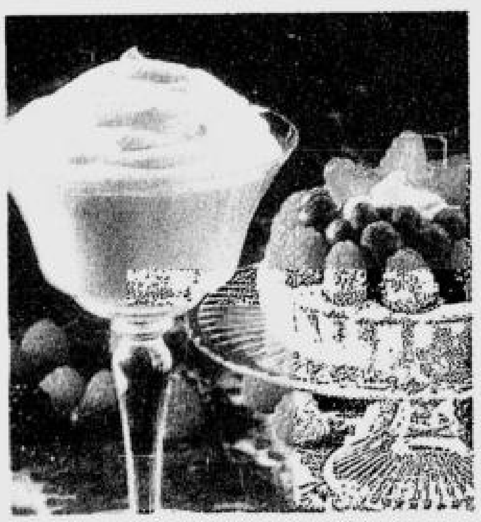
To cap your vegetarian meal, Tin Hau even offers guilt-free desserts such as Sweetened Coconut Pudding with Sweet Corn (P130) and Sweetened Sago Cream with Taro (P130).

From entrée to dessert, every dish displays creativity and is apparently well-conceived. "The vegetarian food that we have are good and they're not too heavy. It took our chefs about a month to come up with everything. Vegetarian dishes are better than meat and good for your health," says Chung.

With such inventive meals, vegetables are no longer bland and unappetizing. And with their bold flavors and healthy ingredients, certainly, these are vegetarian meals that even meat lovers can enjoy.

Tin Hau's Vegetarian Delight runs from May 5-25. It's available daily from 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.-10 p.m. Call Mandarin Oriental Manila at 750-8888 local 2422.

Quick and cool choco ideas



EASY Chocolate Mousse and Chocolate Berry Tart

MINT Grasshopper Sundae and Peanut Butter Breakfast Shake

WITH the heat of the season, everybody can enjoy his favorite Swiss Miss drink with its new, quick and cool ideas. Just grab a blender and Swiss Miss Milk Chocolate Hot Cocoa Mix and you're ready for these great tasting, cool recipes. Available in all leading supermarkets, Swiss Miss Hot Chocolate Mixes are imported and exclusively distributed in the Philippines by Fly Ace Corporation.

Easy chocolate mousse

6 envelopes Swiss Miss Milk Chocolate Hot Cocoa Mix
¼ c boiling water
½ tsp vanilla
1 container (16 oz.) frozen, nondairy whipped topping, thawed
chocolate sprinkles or shaved chocolate curls (optional)

In large bowl, combine Swiss Miss Cocoa Mix with water until cocoa is dissolved. Stir in vanilla. Gently fold together cocoa mixture and whipped topping until well blended. Spoon into individual soufflé cups. Refrigerate 30-40 minutes until firm. Garnish with chocolate sprinkles or chocolate curls if desired. Makes six servings. Refrigeration time: 30 minutes

Spiced Iced Cocoa

6 oz. water
1 envelope Swiss Miss Milk Chocolate Hot Cocoa Mix
2 cinnamon sticks
3 whole cloves
1 strip of fresh orange peel
ice cubes
whipped topping
ground cinnamon

In saucepan, combine water, Swiss Miss Cocoa Mix, 1 cinnamon stick, orange peel, and cloves; bring it to a soft boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncover for 5 minutes; stir occasionally. Meanwhile, fill a tall glass with ice. Pour hot mixture through a strainer into glass; add more ice if desired. Garnish with whipped topping, remaining cinnamon stick, and a sprinkle of ground cinnamon. Makes one serving.

Mint Grasshopper Sundae

1 c milk
1 envelope Swiss Miss Milk Chocolate Hot Cocoa Mix
3 scoops mint chocolate chip ice cream
whipped topping (optional)
sprig of mint (optional)

Whisk together milk and Swiss Miss Cocoa Mix, until well blended and cocoa is completely dissolved. In a tall drinking glass, place three scoops mint chocolate chip ice cream. Add cocoa milk. Garnish with whipped topping and a sprig of mint if desired. Makes one serving.

Swiss Miss Cocoa Frosty

1 c milk
2 envelopes Swiss Miss Milk Chocolate Hot Cocoa Mix
1 tsp vanilla
2-3 c ice cubes
whipped topping

In blender, add milk, Swiss Miss Cocoa Mix, and vanilla; blend well. Add ice and blend until thick and frothy. Pour into glasses and garnish with whipped topping. Makes two servings.

Chocolate Berry Tart

6 oz cream cheese
1 container (8 oz) vanilla yogurt
2 envelopes Swiss Miss Milk Chocolate Hot Cocoa Mix
2 individual tart shells or individual Graham cracker pie crusts
assorted berries in season
whipped topping

In a bowl, whip together cream cheese and yogurt until completely blended. Stir in Swiss Miss Cocoa Mix. Blend well. Fill tart shell with cream cheese mixture and top with berries. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Dollop with whipped topping before serving. Makes two servings. Serving suggestion: For a twist, try using prepared pastry shell instead of pie crust. Refrigeration time: 10 minutes.

Peanut Butter Breakfast Shake

1 c milk
2 envelopes Swiss Miss Milk Chocolate Hot Cocoa Mix
1 whole banana, peeled
¼ c Peter Pan Creamy Peanut Butter
2-3 c ice cubes
whipped topping
chopped nuts

In a blender, add milk and Swiss Miss Cocoa Mix. Blend until thick and frothy. Add more ice if desired. Blend well. Pour into two tall glasses. Garnish with whipped topping and chopped nuts. Makes two servings.

Prime US steak at non-prime prices

"WE want diners to be able to have steak almost any time they feel like it," says Bambi Meer, manager of Tender Bob's.

Occasions for prime US steak are few and far between for Metro Manila meat lovers because of the high price of steak. But with Tender Bob's new scheme, prime meat cuts are now more affordable.

Diners are given the opportunity to purchase their preferred steak cuts at supermarket prices and then to have them cooked on the spot for a minimum cooking fee. The scheme allows sizable savings of up to P300 per person, which represents half of what a usual steak dinner in a well-known establishment would cost.

According to Meer, the scheme follows the concept adopted by a pioneering meat retailer in Subic Bay Freeport. Also owned by the principals of Tender Bobs, Meat Plus has become one of the most popular outlets in the former American base because of its value steak meals.

At Meat Plus, one can select ribeye, sirloin or T-bone from the chiller and have it cooked for a small fee, or take it home. A 300-g cut of ribeye, which can be shared by two average eaters, goes for P315 while 500 grams of sirloin for two big eaters sell for P300. Those who prefer to eat the steaks at the store can also order sidings such as corn and potatoes for a minimal fee.

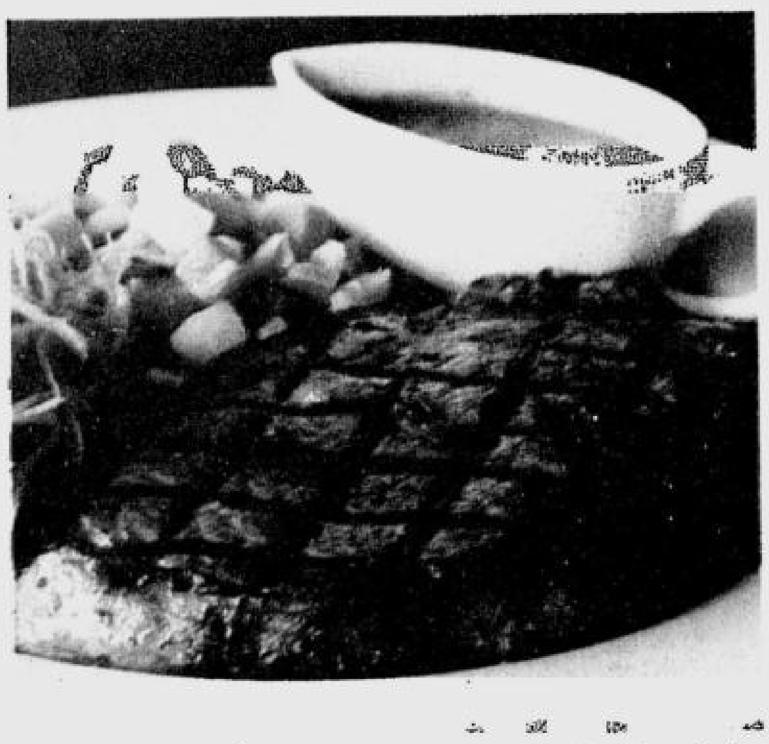
Tender Bob's follows the same pricing scheme and offers, in addition, cozy bistro surroundings and other delectable items on the menu, such as a house salad with raspberry vinaigrette dressing, fresh mushroom soup and a delicate scampi.

According to Meer, the cut most preferred by Filipinos is ribeye, which has excellent marbling and is naturally full of flavor. When one cooks ribeye, the high heat liquefies the marbling and coats the meat. The steak cooks in its own "natural butter" and there is little need to add more flavor with seasonings. Salt and pepper will suffice, according to Meer, but he cautions that because salt absorbs liquid, it must be added only as the steak is being grilled and not earlier.

While Tender Bob's has access to steaks from other parts of the world, Meer points out that steak connoisseurs still prefer US-grade beef. Because they are raised on an abundance of corn, US cows produce prime meat that is somewhat sweet.

In addition to steaks, Tender Bob's regulars swear by the restaurant's burgers, which are available in frozen packs of 10. The 6-oz patties likewise make use of full-flavored US beef and don't need additives. For variation, they are served in the restaurant in various ways: with teriyaki sauce and tofu; with three kinds of cheeses; in kiddie portions, etc.

Served with crisp potato hay, a Tender Bob's burger makes a great meal with an appeal that cuts across age and social divides. "People drive out for our burgers and assure us it is always worth a trip," Meer says.



PRIME US steaks at value prices: Choose the cut and have it cooked on the spot for a minimum cooking charge.

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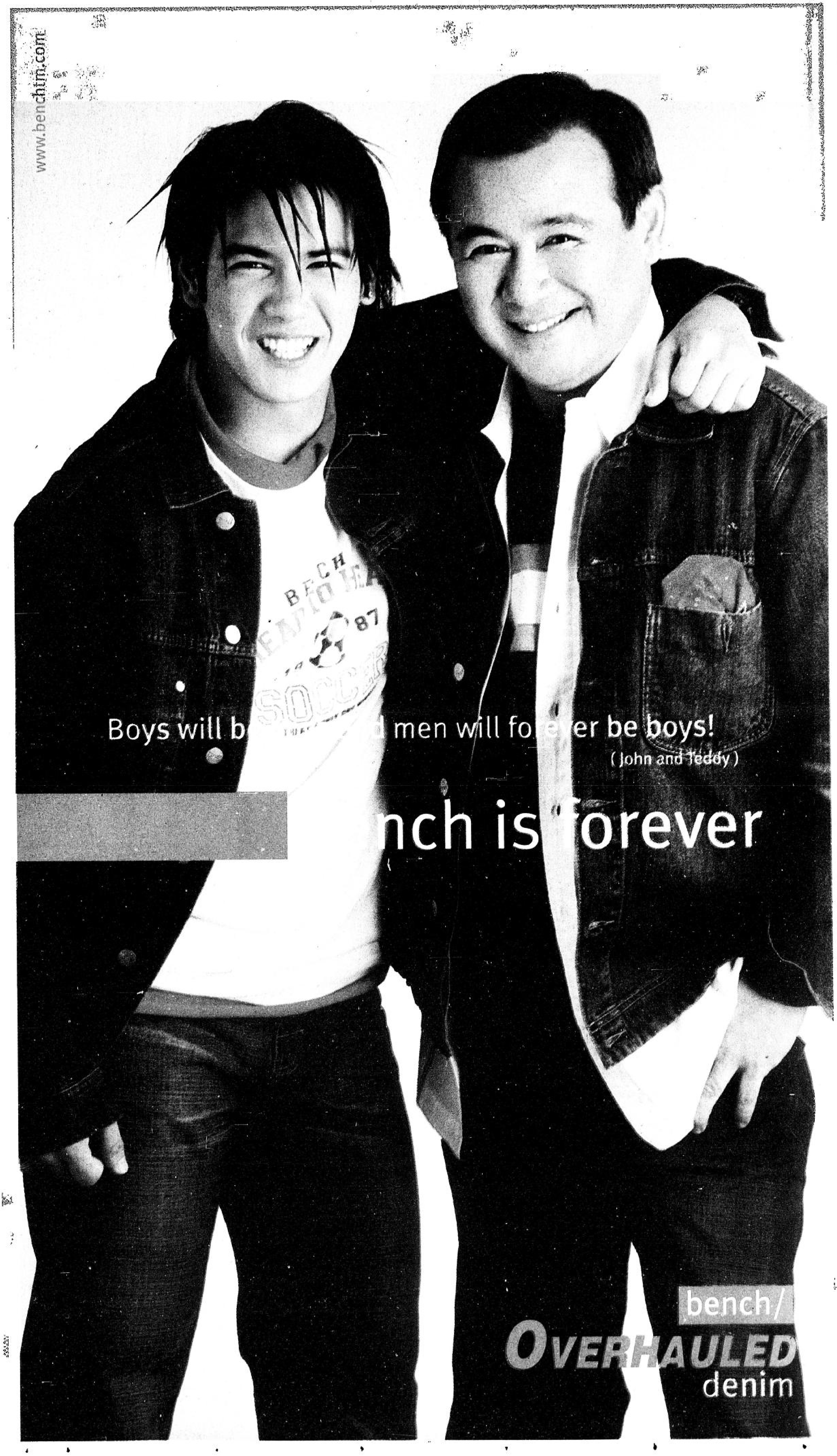
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Travel agents refuse to refund downpayment for canceled trips

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

CONSUMERS who want to cancel bookings for tour packages to SARS-affected travel destinations are now having problems getting their money back. While some travel agencies are benevolent enough to refund payments on canceled bookings, there are agencies that refuse to return customers' money.

Ms C. Ng is one distraught consumer whose travel agent refuses to refund the downpayment for a canceled cruise that would take her family on a package tour with Hong Kong as point of departure.

She related to us her experience. "Because of the SARS epidemic, we decided to postpone or cancel our cruise. I paid $200 per member of my family who is joining the cruise."

The travel agency, according to Ms Ng, refused to refund her downpayment. And worse, it is asking her to pay the full fare for the tour! "I can understand why the agency refuses to refund the downpayment. But to ask us for payment of the full package fare is inconsiderate. SARS is an unforeseen development. Is this valid? What are my options?"

We consulted several travel agents and got the general consensus that if the travel agency of Ms Ng was benevolent enough, it would return her downpayment. Under the circumstances, her best option would be to postpone the trip. They added that Ms Ng should not be constrained to pay the full fare for the canceled tour.

The agents explained that most travel agencies are in very rough waters at this moment, and they hope the public would understand their predicament. Tourists are canceling booked tours, mostly to SARS-affected destinations. Because of this unforeseen development, the travel companies are caught with pre-booked tours, hotel rooms, tour vehicles, airplane seats, etc. Many of them had blocked off hotel rooms and cruises, flights, bought airline tickets, and moved a number of hired people as well.

No hotel refund

We can understand why travel agencies refuse to return downpayment for canceled bookings due to the SARS epidemic. But hotels, star hotels for that matter, should be understanding enough in the name of customer relations to refund reservation fees for cancellations made by customers a week prior to occupancy.

Jennifer Dy (jdy_pe@canada.com) wrote: "I made reservations last March with Fort Ilocandia to book us April 14-16 for two rooms, and paid the 50-percent downpayment required. However, due to news about SARS, we called up the hotel on April 7 and canceled our reservation. The hotel refused to refund our downpayment. As advised by the hotel sales manager, we faxed a letter to the general manager. The following day, the sales manager called us up to tell us our request for a refund was denied."

Dy argued that five-star hotels in Manila returned downpayments for canceled reservations. "I was told it was different with provincial reservation. I called again for the refund and was told that we were not entitled to it because it was the peak season. The hotel should have informed its customers about cancellation policies."

Airport bane

Flight cancellations and delays are perennial hassles passengers have to put up with. Bad weather is understandable, but lack of a standby mechanic to repair engine trouble is inexcusable. That was reportedly the reason the early-morning flight of PAL Tacloban/Manila last Friday was delayed for several hours.

According to a passenger, the mechanic had to come from Manila to fix the engine. The passengers, who had waited as early as 6 a.m., were able to fly, finally, at 3 p.m. If it was any consolation, PAL provided free food to the passengers.

Flight delays can indeed play havoc on one's schedules. A case in point was the experience related to us by Jonathan Lee. He and his wife had joined PAL's "Palakbayan" promotion last March, a vacation package that consisted of three days and two nights in Boracay. Unfortunately, their scheduled flight at 9:20 a.m. was canceled due to engine trouble, and passengers were able to leave finally at 3:30 p.m. Due to the delay, Lee said they lost one day of the prepaid tour package.

"That meant only one day for leisure instead of two days, and one day's worth of hotel booking gone down the drain," Dee wrote. He added that he complained at the PAL counter in Manila prior to the flight and was advised to coordinate with the Kalibo office for a one-day extension in Boracay to compensate for the lost hours. When they arrived in Kalibo, however, they were told that PAL would not compensate them in any way.

Dee added, "We were even told we should be happy because they did not fly the [troubled] plane [as scheduled]. That was an unexpected remark from someone who represented the premier airline of the country."

Meat handled with bare hands

Publicist Mila Alora is calling on Walter Mart-Calamba to require its fresh-meat concessionaires to provide protective health gear to meat handlers.

"I was horrified to see that the sales clerks used their bare hands to handle meat orders. I asked for hamburger meat and couldn't believe my eyes when the sales girl used her hands without the benefit of gloves. I thought it was bad enough when they didn't wear the necessary hair net," Alora said.

"SARS or no SARS, meat sellers should be compelled to wear masks, gloves and hair nets," she said.

Alora added that Monterey, a leading meat seller, assured consumers that it would require meat handlers to wear protective gear.

Announcement

A major aquaculture conference on May 7-10 will be held in Bacolod City. It is supposed to be the biggest technology event in Philippine aquaculture where 40 resource speakers will share their expertise and 20 researchers will present their papers. In addition, there will be 30 exhibits on fisheries, shrimp farming, processing and marketing of fish products, and inland aquaculture.

UP Aquaculture Society Inc. and Cruz Aquaculture are organizing the congress with support from the following agencies of the Department of Science and Technology: DOST Region 6 and Philippine Council for Aquaculture and Marine Research and Development (PCAMRD). Call 435-4107 or e-mail pace@lasaltech.com.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-176. Series of 2003.

Seminar on managing restos, canteens

RESTAURATEURS, hoteliers, resort and canteen operators and those planning to open their own foodservice business now have a chance to hone their skills when ProActive Center for Training (Pact) holds its Managing a Restaurant/Canteen Seminar-Workshop on May 7-16, 1-6 p.m.

Reservations are currently being accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. Only 20 participants will be accepted. Seminar fee is P5,000 per participant inclusive of field trip to equipment and food suppliers in Metro Manila, manual, handouts, snacks, certificate of completion, and workshop materials.

The training will cover such topics as planning the concept, menu, location, layout and equipment; hygiene and sanitation; human resource development; and cost control, among others. Food service consultants, restaurant and hotel executives, and professors of hotel and restaurant management are tapped to be facilitators.

Call 787-6370 or (0916) 822-6053, e-mail at pactserv@yahoo.com

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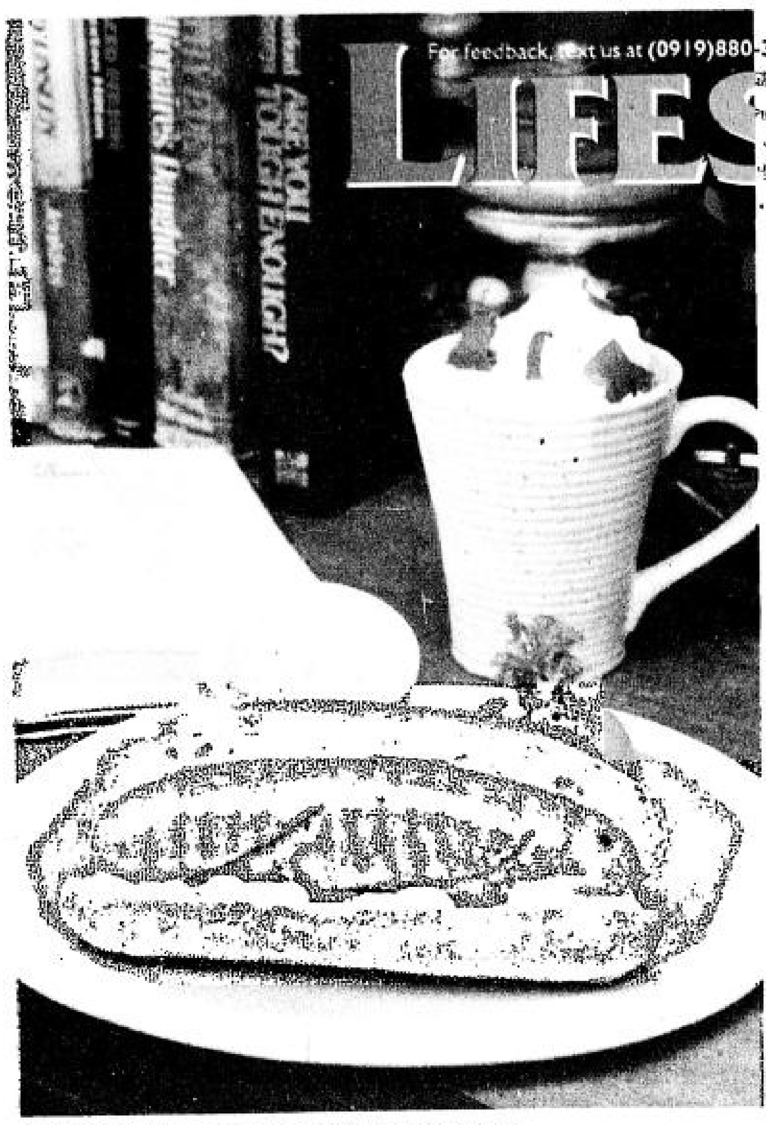

HUNGARIAN sausage and Caramel Renverse

Peaberry challenges bigger coffee franchises with its unique blend

Coffee, berry or pea?

Text by Cathy Babao Guballa
Photos by Mandy Navasero

CHARMING, quaint and cozy. Much like dining in a friend's living room is the feeling you get when you're in Peaberry, a new coffee and dining place located across the IBM building in Eastwood City.

Peaberry derives its name from a phenomenon that happens to about two percent of harvested coffee beans. When green coffee seeds fall and divide into two seeds, the two parts form one concave seed. This is called a peaberry.

Due to their unique development, peaberries are very flavorful. At the Peaberry in Eastwood, the coffee contains 10 times more of the unusual beans than any other coffee blend available in Manila. This is guaranteed by the owners, young couple Carlo and Rica Buenaflor.

Both trained in hotel and restaurant management at the University of Las Vegas in Nevada (UNLV) where they met on the first day of school, the Buenaflors are steeped in culinary art. They traveled and trained extensively in various parts of the United States.

Carlo's family is part-owner of Bigg's, a successful fast-food franchise that started in Bicol and now has branches in Manila. Rica, on the other hand, had a long stint at the exclusive Pebble Beach Golf Club in Monterey, California, from where, she says, she got most of the inspiration for Peaberry.

Country home

Not surprisingly, there is something Californian and country club-ish about Peaberry. Its interiors by Ivy and Cynthia Almario conjure images of an American country home's huge library: high ceilings, dark wooden chairs and tables, soft, comfortable cushions where you can sit for hours on end and shelves overflowing with books on varying topics. The books, by the way, are from the vast collection of banker Sixto Roxas III, who is related by affinity to Peaberry's owners.

In the daytime, natural light comes through floor-to-ceiling windows. Soft reading lamps on tables provide lighting in the evening.

"We wanted a place where our friends could come, and just kick back and relax," Rica says. "We also wanted it to have the atmosphere of a home owned by people who have traveled and filled it with precious things from different parts of the world," Carlo adds.

The Peaberry is popular with the Eastwood office crowd for small meetings, as well as residents of nearby exclusive villages. Mothers taking a break from a frazzled day are often seen occupying a nook or two at the restaurant, reading books and sipping coffee.

The restaurant attracts people of all ages. Whether they are in the corporate world, students or housebound mothers, the place offers them some quiet after a harried day. It is small enough not to be intimidating, seating 20 to 25 people, yet big enough to give privacy.

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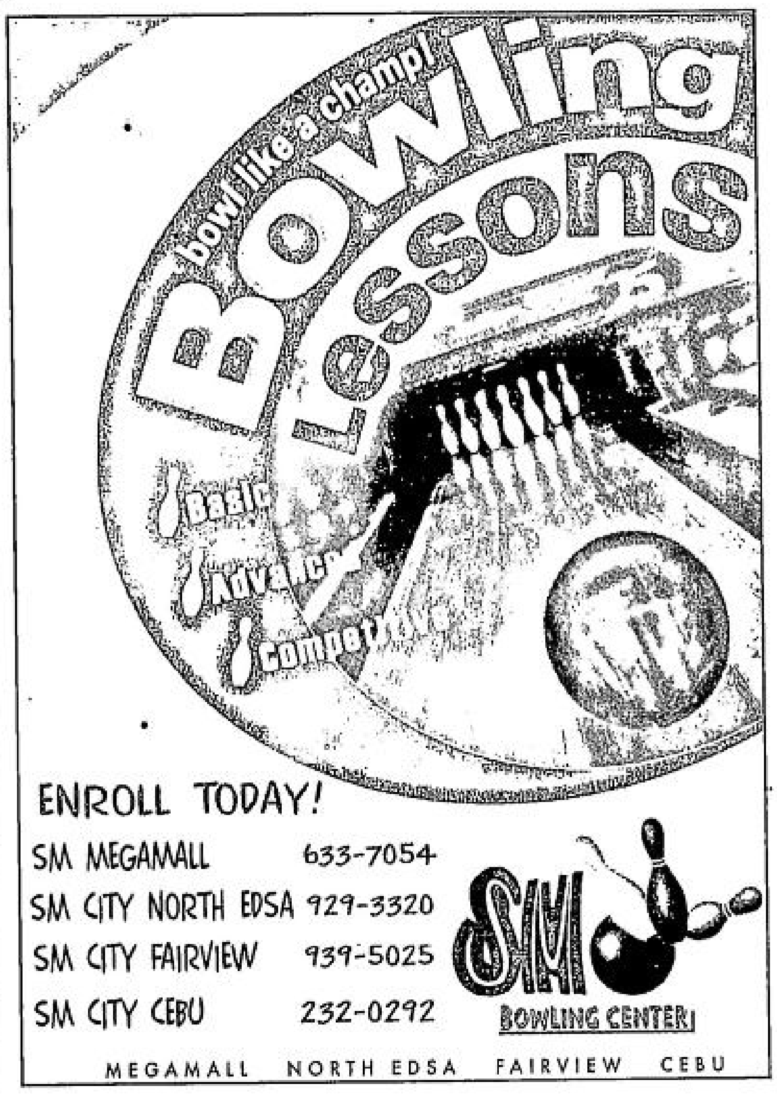

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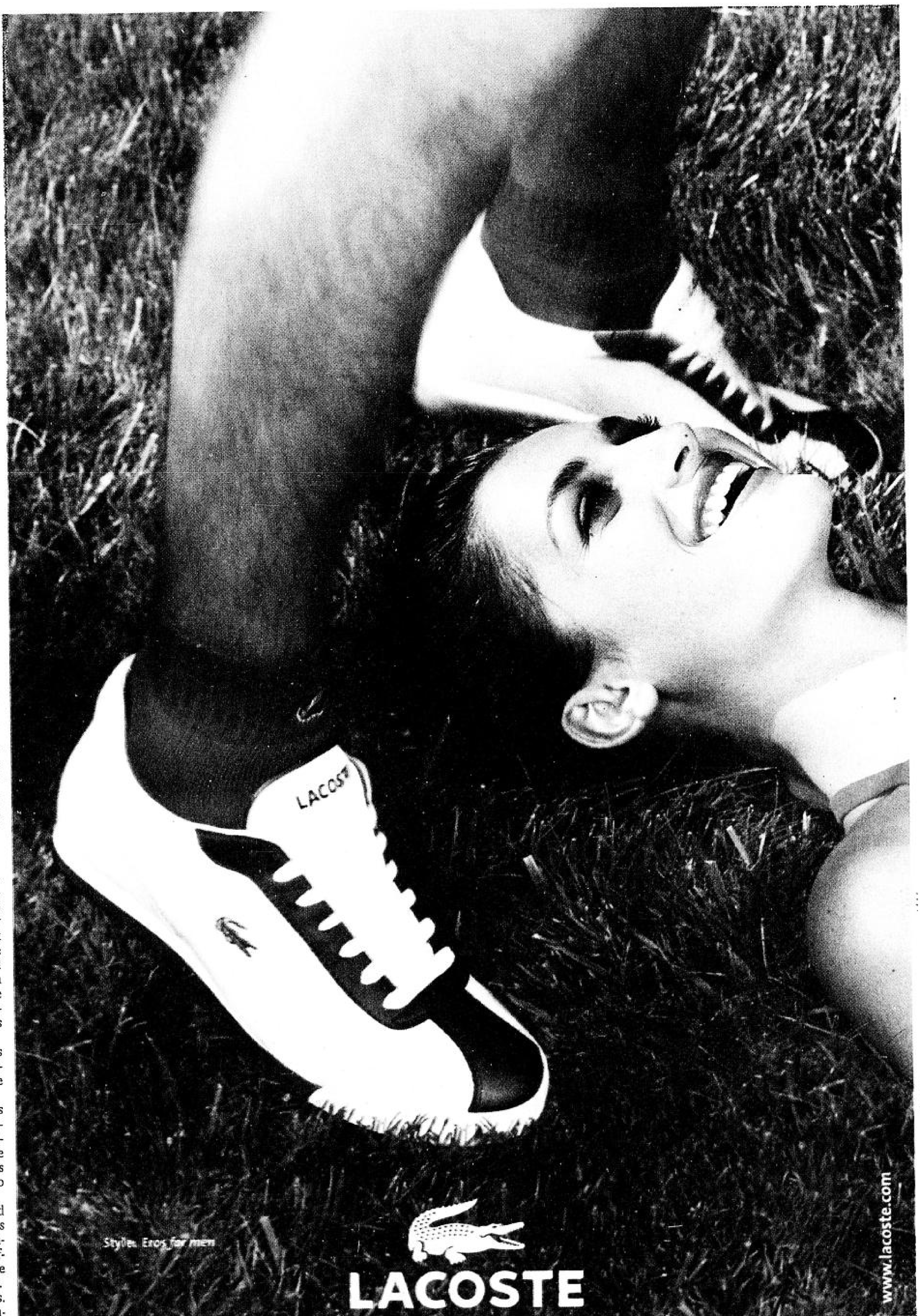

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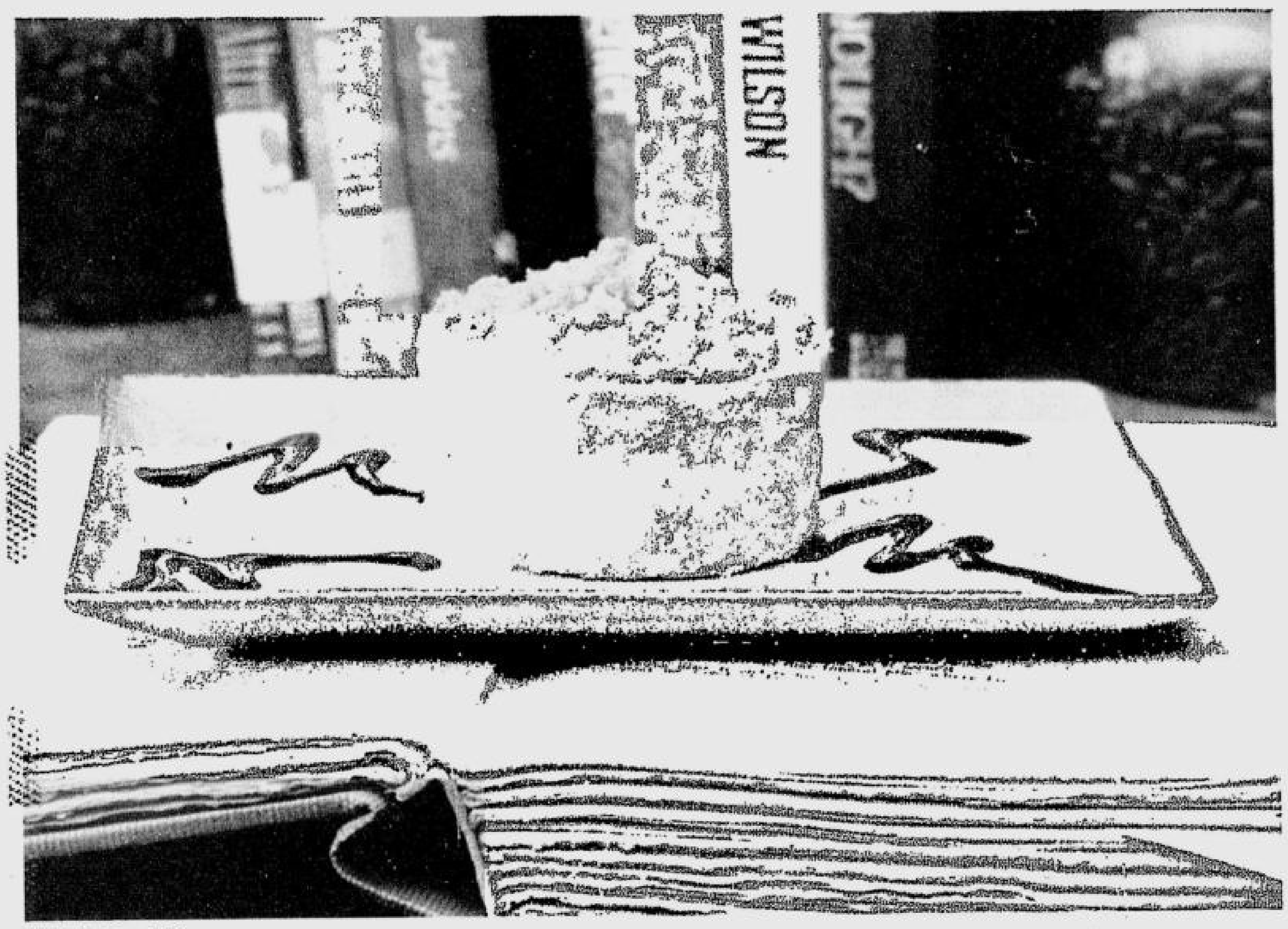
Ayala Center, Makati
Telephone 867-4077

• Robinsons Place Manila
Padre Faura Wing, Level 2
Telephone 522-7778

• The Power Plant Mall
Makati, Ground Floor
Telephone 898-0933

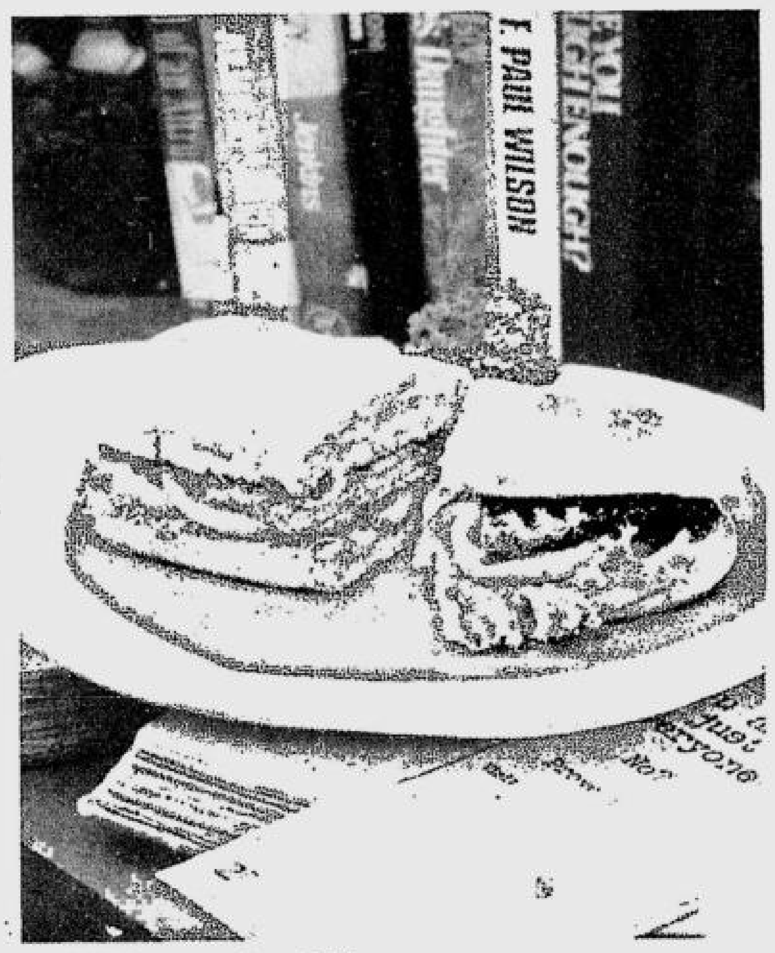
• The Podium
Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City
Telephone 633-8226



FRENCH Apple Pie

PASTA al funghi

Coffee, berry or pea?



GRILLED Angus steak sandwich

From page G1

All that jazz

On a regular day, soft jazz music plays in the background. On Friday evenings, with a jazz band playing, the place gets packed with young people from nearby offices.

More than the interiors and ambience, however, it's the food and the coffee that draw people to Peaberry. Coffee comes piping hot in huge mugs, and entrée is served on a platter custom-made by Lanelle Abueva.

Unlike your standard issue franchised coffee, Peaberry brews are indeed flavorful and sure to satisfy any java junkie's need for a fix. Personal favorites are the Caramel Renverse and the Reese coffee (yes, the peanut butter Reese). The restaurant also has a selection of teas to choose from.

People wanting something more substantial than just coffee can choose from a list containing several pastas and panini sandwiches. The Pasta al funghi has white wine sauce with three kinds of mushroom while the healthy and delicious Panino alla Margherita is a grilled ciabatta sandwich filled with tomatoes, fresh basil pesto and Tilsit cheese.

Those with bigger appetites should try the grilled Angus steak sandwich—Angus steak toasted in ciabatta bread with lettuce, tomatoes, and onions. Also tasty and filling is the sliced Hungarian sausage and onions cooked in beer. The sausage and onion ring slices are cooked in beer and topped with melted Tilsit cheese.

The meal could end with any of the excellent hot or cold coffees paired off with special desserts created by US-trained pastry chef, Buddy Trinidad—Mango Madness, Almond Roca cake or French apple pie.

Coffee prices at the Peaberry are slightly higher than in many other coffee places but considering the whole package you get—the ambience, quality of food and drink plus the experience of tasting an extraordinary bean in your java, it's an extra cost well worth it.

RICA and Carlo Buenaflor

PEABERRY is popular for small meetings.

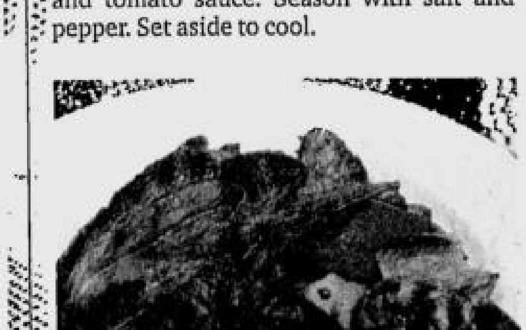
Grilling time

START heating those grills as you prepare your Chicken Basil Panini, Grilled Stuffed Pusit and Grilled Lamb Chops. These creations are even better when matched with Fiesta Rice. So welcome summer with these dishes from San Miguel Purefoods Culinary Center.

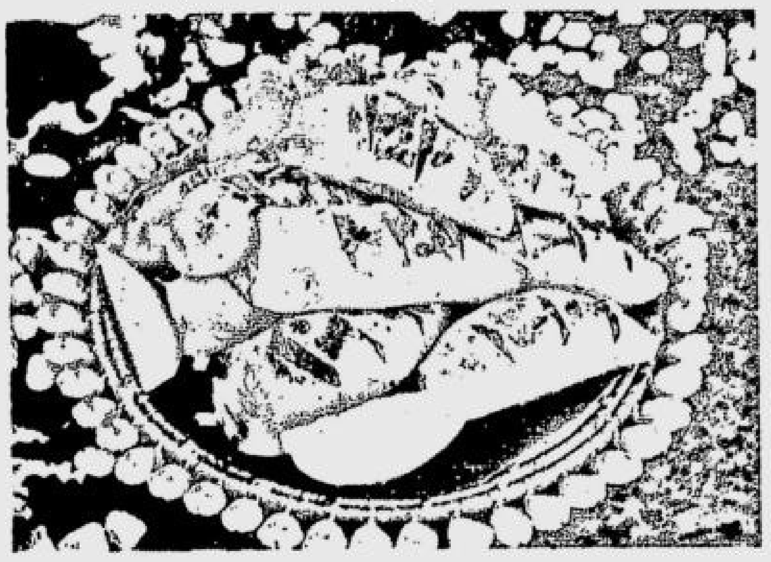
Chicken Basil Panini

2 tbsp Dari Creme Classic
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp minced garlic
1 tbsp chopped onions
1 c chopped tomatoes
250 g Magnolia Chicken Breast Fillet, diced
1 tbsp chopped basil leaves
¼ c tomato sauce
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp ground black pepper
4 pcs ciabatta
½ c Magnolia Quickmelt Cheese, grated

Melt margarine and add olive oil. Sauté garlic and onions. Add tomatoes and chicken. Cook for 5 minutes. Add basil leaves and tomato sauce. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside to cool.



SUMMER Lamb Chops



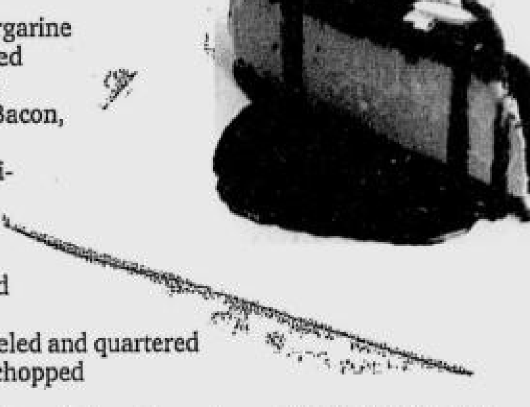
GRILLED Stuffed Pusit

Split ciabatta in half. Brush with Dari Creme. Fill ciabatta with prepared chicken mixture. Top with grated cheese. Cover with other half of bun and grill until bread is toasted and cheese melts. Slice sandwich in half. Makes 8 servings.

Fiesta Rice

½ c Star Classic Margarine
2 tbsp garlic, chopped
1 c onions, chopped
¼ c Purefoods Bacon, chopped
2 pc Chinese chorizo, sliced thinly
3 tbsp soy sauce
1 c *tinapa* meat, shredded and deboned
6 c cooked rice
2 pc salted eggs, peeled and quartered
¼ c spring onions, chopped

Sauté garlic and onions in Star Margarine. Stir in the bacon, Chinese chorizo and half of the *tinapa* (reserve the rest for topping). Add soy sauce and cooked rice and mix well. Top with reserved *tinapa*, salted eggs and spring onions before serving. Makes 6 servings.



MOCHA Fudge Pie

Summer Lamb Chops

4 pc Monterey Lamb Chops
Marinade:
5 tbsp soy sauce
3 tbsp sherry
1 tbsp minced garlic
1 tbsp grated ginger
3 tbsp brown sugar
3 tbsp creamy peanut butter
3 tbsp Dari Creme Margarine, melted

Combine marinade ingredients in a bowl. Mix well and add lamb chops. Marinate in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes. Remove meat from marinade and grill over moderate heat until meat is cooked through. Makes 4 servings.

Mocha Fudge Pie

3 c chocolate cookie crumbs
½ c Magnolia Gold Butter, melted
½ c chocolate fudge (store-bought)
3 tbsp almonds chopped
½ gallon mocha ice cream, softened

Combine cookie crumbs and margarine. Press half of the crumbs into a 9" removable bottom pan. Chill for 10 minutes or until crust hardens.

Spread the chocolate fudge evenly on the crust and sprinkle with chopped almonds. Pour the softened ice cream into the pan and place in the freezer for an hour. Top with the remaining cookie crumbs. Freeze for at least 24 hours. Garnish with chocolate fudge and chopped almonds before serving.

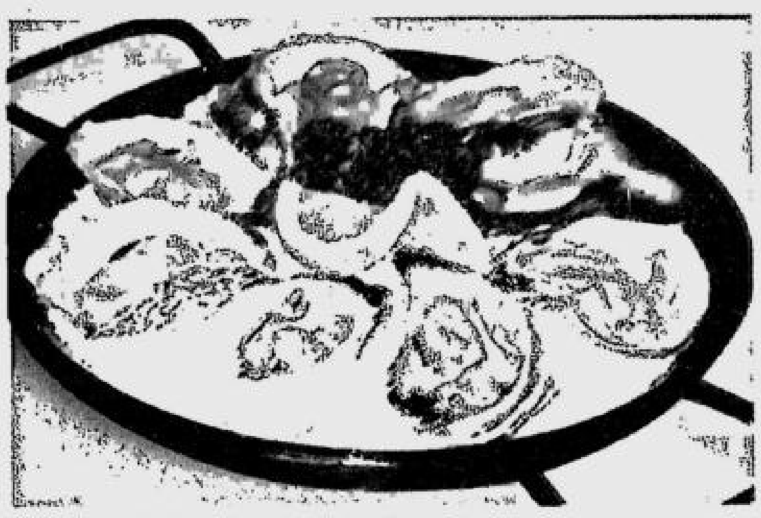
CHICKEN Basil Panini

Makes 8 servings.

Grilled Stuffed Pusit

1 kg medium-size *pusit* (squid)
4 pc onions, chopped
3 pc tomatoes, seeded and chopped
½ c Star Garlic Margarine, melted
Salt and pepper

Clean the squid and remove the skin and head. Set aside. In a bowl, mix onions and tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Stuff squid with onion mixture. Insert a barbecue stick or toothpick through the opening to secure the filling. Grill stuffed squid and head and brush generously with melted Star Garlic Margarine. Serves 5-6.



PANTALAN'S Baked Oyster in Garlic Sauce

Seafood galore

PANTALAN Restaurant in Luneta offers seafood dishes like Baked Oyster in Garlic Sauce, Crispy Pusit Ulo, Sinigang na Ulo at Tiyan ng Salmon and Creamy Seafood Bouillabaisse. At dinner time, lively music welcomes customers and guests at the restaurant.

DINING OUT

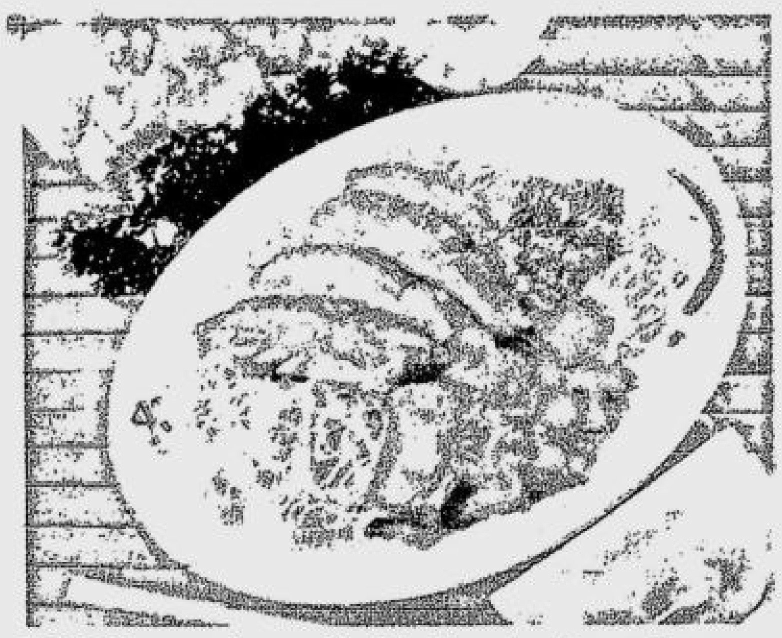
FLAVOURS of China, located on the ground floor of Tomas Morato Plaza, corner Tomas Morato and A. Roces Streets in Quezon City, offers authentic Cantonese food like Seafood Spinach Soup, Lechon Macau, Chicken And Prawn Hot Salad, Steamed Fish Fillet With Taosi And Garlic, Seafood Salad Roll and BBQ Combination Platter.

CHEF and Brewer, located on the ground floor of AIC Gold Tower Building on Emerald Avenue, features Oysters, Lengua Salpicao, Tuna Sisig, Boneless Crispy Pata served with Spicy Garlic Sauce, Adobo and Crisp Tuna Rolls, Barbecue Spareribs and Bourbon Chicken, Pasta and C&B Burger topped with bacon, mushroom, onion and melted Swiss cheese.

POPEYES Chicken & Biscuits offers snack savers 2-6 p.m. every day until May 31. These include fried chicken with Lipton iced tea, Cajun fries, onion rings or spaghetti, all served with Lipton iced tea.

Visit Popeyes Chicken & Biscuits restaurants at SM Southmall; Robinsons Metro East; New Farmers Plaza; Robinsons Galleria; Filinvest Festival Mall-Alabang; Greenhills Shopping Center; SM Bicutan and Greenbelt 1.

PANTALAN'S Sinigang na Ulo at Tiyan ng Salmon



TIONG Kee recently opened its Makati branch on Pasong Tamo corner Sabio Street at La Fuerte Plaza. The restaurant offers Roast Duck Asado Noodle and Congee, *asado* and dimsum. Call 813-6455.

Discover new ways with lamb

MEAT & Livestock Australia, in cooperation with 37 restaurants, hotels and four retail chains, is sponsoring a lamb festival, "Oooh-La-Lamb!", May 1-31.

Each participating restaurant will create five new lamb dishes for the promotion. Participating in the festival are: Hyatt Regency Manila, Hotel Inter-Continental Manila, New World Renaissance Hotel, The Westin Philippine Plaza, Aqua, Bianca's Cafe and Vinotek, Carpaccio Ristorante Italiano, Casa Armas-Greenbelt 3, Casa Armas-Podium, Casa Armas-Jupiter, Cascada, Chateau 1771, Cirkulo, Ilustrado, La Tienda, Le Soufflé-The Fort, Le Soufflé-Ortigas, Top of the Citi, Mamma, Mario's-St. Francis Square, Mario's-T. Morato, MYLK, Nuvo, Old Swiss Inn-Makati, Old Swiss Inn-Paco, Patio Guernica Restaurant, People's Palace, Portico, Raj, Restaurant 9501, Sala, Soleil, Tender Bob's Steak House, Uva, Zucchini's Grill & Vinotek, Restaurant 12 and Una Mas, and retail outlets Price Smart, Santi's, Monterey and Shopwise.

'Designer' sandwiches for yuppies on the run

A SANDWICH by any other name is still a sandwich. Not so, say Jackie "Yogie" Yarcia and Frederick "Dek" Herrera, two friends behind a novelty sandwich bar, which they claim to be a wellness fast-food place. With the sandwich meals wrapped in designer-style, Burberry pattern, the friends called it Plaid Sandwich Bar.

The idea was hatched in London where they met. She was then a student at the London School of Economics (LSE) and he, a longtime resident managing the family's realty, travel and foreign remittance facility business. That is, when he was not busy with songwriting and show production. (Herrera launched three years ago a self-produced album here and his composition "Ako Na Lang Ang Lalayo" made it to the single hit list.)

Plaid the Sandwich Bar Co. is geared toward the fast-paced working style of the GenX corporate persons who, when they need to eat, grab a hefty but healthy sandwich meal to go—no time wasted.

Plaid's chef consultant, Abigail Almeda, conceptualized all the sandwich meals, paninis and baguettes, four varieties of fresh salads that boast of the freshest lettuce varieties and herbs. The fresh fruit mixes called Smoothies are blended and bottled in the kitchen according to strict standard procedures set by the chef.

She also makes pastries and cookies and three choices of Crisps (*camote*, potato and *ube*) for the "munchie monster."

Diners on the run can pick up designer items like Caesar Salad, Chicken Tandoori, Adobo Flakes, Catch of the Day (fish flakes), Seafood Executive, BLT, Chicken Rosemary, Asian Pork Tenderloin.

Chief business consultant Benedict Uy, a half Chinese/Spanish yuppie and Yogie's schoolmate, did a feasibility study of the venture. The young entrepreneur laid down all the business formulation including *feng shui* arrangements.

The sandwich bar's location on Ruby Road, for example, seemed a bit inconspicuous at first since the back street was used mostly for parking. But the new traffic rerouting scheme has made Ruby an integral one-way route to ADB Avenue.

Uy's study of the compact Ortigas business center identified a suitable location for the sandwich bar: the Oriental Square building where most call centers were situated. The building has some 4,000 above-average- salary yuppies.

FRESH, HEALTHY AND HEFTY. Plaid Sandwich Meals choices are paninis, baguettes, cakes, cookies and crisps.

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It will be hard to hide your joy over your potted edible gardens! Make gardening a greater pleasure with ENRICO – the soil-less potting mix organically-enriched for herbs, fruits & vegetables. Fill your pots with ENRICO instead of soil and experience the thrill of healthier, richer harvests from your very own potted farms!
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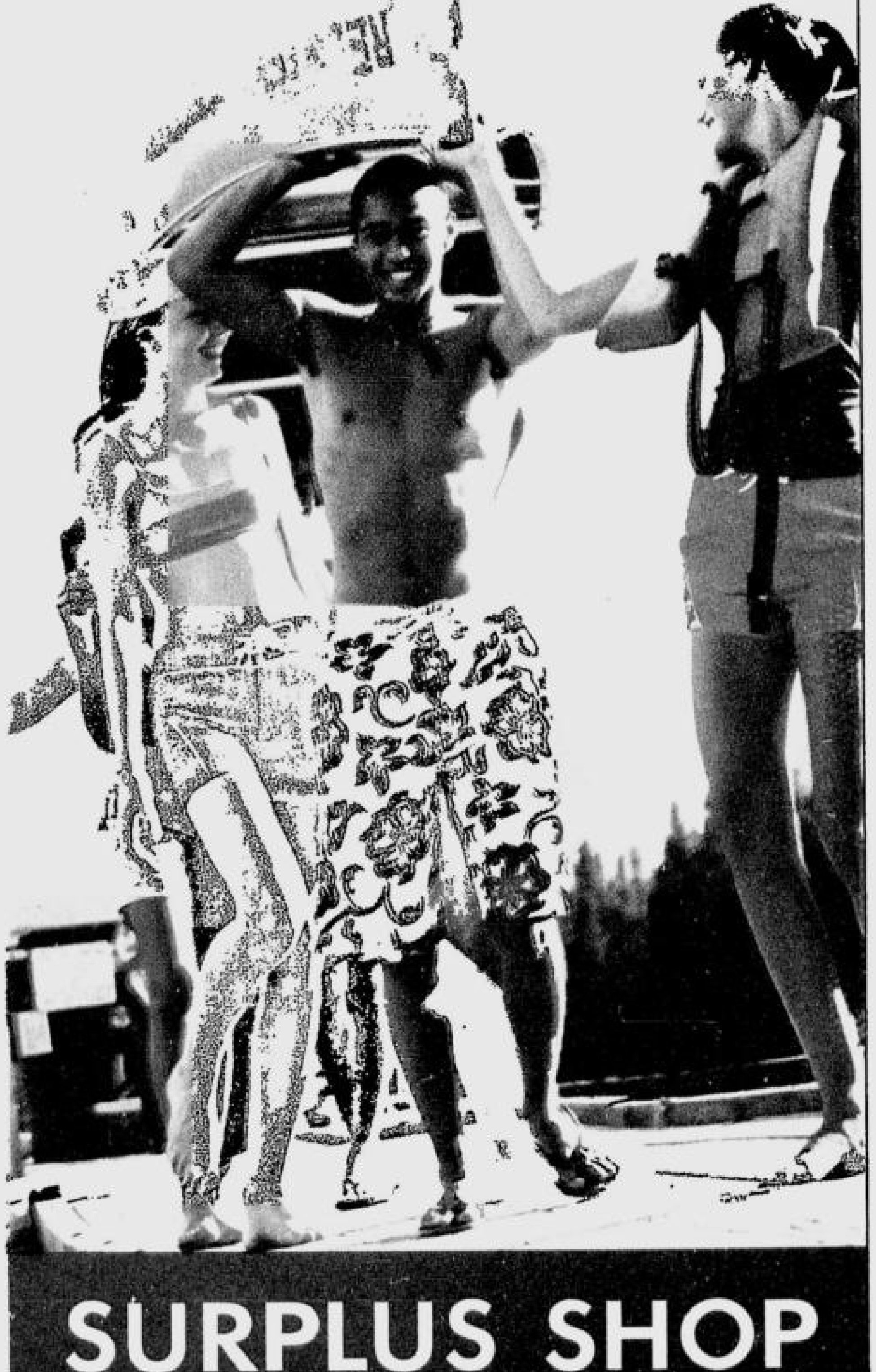

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Hank McKinnell, Chairman and CEO-Pfizer, Inc.
April 2003

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The Breakthrough Treatments of Tomorrow.

Moving forward, our scientists will continue their search for new medicines and cures for diseases like Alzheimer's, diabetes and cancer. Today's Pfizer has more new medicines under development than any other company, with over 300 research projects already underway.

Helping People in Need Now.

We are also filled with even more passion to help not just the sick but our country and its communities. This translates to our philanthropic work – bringing wider access to healthcare through our Leaders for Health Project, a partnership with the Department of Health and the Ateneo Graduate School of Business, making health information readily available through our medical information centers and website partnerships, assisting affected families during calamities, undertaking outreach programs for needy people and communities, facilitating advocacy campaigns for various causes through our Diabetes-Friendly Schools, Child Life Centers, Philippine Cancer Society partnership to create cancer awareness, our Read to Lead program – and more that we are planning to initiate in the future.

The acquisition of Pharmacia makes Pfizer a more valued company to the people around the world who are counting on us the most. Patients.

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